

***Clematis orientalis* L.**  
RANUNCULACEAE

oriental virginsbower

Synonyms: *Clematis aurea* A. Nels. & J.F. Macbr.  
*Viticella orientalis* (L.) W.A. Weber



**General Description.**—Oriental virginsbower, also known as orange peel or orange peel clematis, is a deciduous, sometimes suffruticose vine or scrambling shrub. The multiple stems may reach 8 m in length and as much as 7 cm in thickness. Stems are covered with longitudinally fissured gray-brown bark. Inner bark is green. Vines cling to rocks and other plants by twining as they climb. The roots are weak and flexible. Fine roots are tan or orange-tan. The leaves are pinnately compound with three to seven coarsely-toothed to entire, ovate to linear-lanceolate leaflets 1 to 5 cm long. The foliage has a gray-green color. Axillary cymes, which may have one to many flowers, are borne on the current season's growth. Four yellow, yellow-orange, or yellowish-green sepals give the flowers their color. Flowers have a delicate fragrance. The feather-like style, 3 to 10 cm long, remains attached to the achene and functions as a wing. There are  $2n = 16$ , 32 chromosomes (Plants for a Future 2003, Welsh and others 1987, Wu and others 2001).

**Range.**—Oriental virginsbower is native from Turkey through Asia to the Korean Peninsula and

south to Iran and Northwest India (Griffiths 1994). The species has been widely planted as an ornamental and has naturalized and escaped in Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico (Natural Resources Conservation Service 2003) and probably other places in the world. There are two varieties, *orientalis* and *robusta*, separated on the basis of pedicel length and thickness (Wu and others 2001).

**Ecology.**—Oriental virginsbower grows in shrublands, riverbanks, gullies, sand depressions, and riparian forests in hot, dry valleys and desert and semidesert areas. In Utah, oriental virginsbower is mostly found along rivers, creeks, and intermittent streams at the mouth of canyons. It is not present in cooler sites farther up the canyons. It requires well-drained soils, but is not particular about soil texture, and tolerates acid and alkaline soils from a wide range of parent materials. It does well on chalky soils (Plants for a Future 2003). The species inhabits sites with elevations between 400 and 3,800 m (Wu and others 2001). It is hardy to about  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Plants For a Future 2003) and presumably survives from roots after top damage. Oriental virginsbower will climb taller vegetation, fences, and rocks, but forms mounds and mats when objects to climb are not available.

**Reproduction.**—Oriental virginsbower flowers between August and October. Both flowers and fruits are often present on the plant at the same time. The flowers are pollinated by bees and flies (Plants for a Future 2003). A group of air-dried seeds collected in Utah averaged 911 seeds/g. Oriental virginsbower seeds are dispersed by the wind. Seedlings are not abundant. It reproduces vegetatively by sprouting from the root crown and by layering.

**Growth and Management.**—Growth of oriental virginsbower is rapid, at least 1 m/year from sprouts or existing stems. Although the risk of environmental damage is not severe, because it is an alien, the species should not be used in environmental restoration plantings. No specific

recommendations for control are available, but the general procedure of cutting plants and spot spraying the sprouts with broadleaf herbicide would probably be effective. The use of potted seedlings or rooted cuttings for ornamentals is recommended. They should be outplanted in the spring after the frost danger has passed. Pruning should take place in the spring (Plants for a Future 2003).

**Benefits.**—Oriental virginibower is planted as an ornamental and ground cover. Plants escaped into the wild help protect the soil, furnish cover for wildlife, and add beauty to the landscape, especially during the fall when it produces flower and seed heads. Oriental virginibower is used in landscaping as a flowering ground cover. Infusions are used as a gargle for sore and ulcerated throats and to treat dog bites (Plants for a future 2003).

### References

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