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Background:

Tetrastigma pubinerve Merr. and Chun is in the Vitaceae (grape) family. The genus *Tetrastigma* is best known for its association with *Rafflesia kerri*, Thailand's largest flower. *R. kerri* is parasitic on *Tetrastigma* vines.

The ornamental vine, *Tetrastigma voinierianum*, grows in USDA zones 9 and above. *T. voinierianum* is a rapidly growing vine endemic to Vietnam. Deep, green leaves are silvery green and furry underneath. The leaves are a foot long and are held away from the brown, furry stems on long stalks. Long tendrils help the vine climb. Easily capable of growing 25 to 30 feet, horticulturists claim it needs bright but not direct light and high humidity.

Another relative, *Tetrastigma nitens*, is distributed from northern New South Wales to North Queensland. *T. nitens* occurs in many different habitats from sea level to 800 m. Generally occurring in wet rainforests, the vine climbs using its tendrils. *T. nitens* will climb to the tops of trees and begin to spread, possibly shading out the trees. In a sunny spot the vines can branch profusely and become so heavy, it may break the branches that support it. Normally, however, the plant is quite benign. Leaves are alternate and composed of elliptical leaflets. The leaflets are 10-15 cm long and have a few serrations. The leaves are thick, smooth, and shiny. The older leaves are not fibrous and are said to be a good, cooked vegetable.

Reproduction:

Any piece of vine that breaks off can easily root. However, the plant may stay the same size for quite some time before establishing and growing rapidly (G. Roe, personal communication).

The 1 cm wide fruit is black and ripens in the summer. *T. nitens* fruit tastes similar to cultivated grapes and contains 1-3 small seeds. The foliage must be in full sun for fruit to form (Dick, 1994). The fruit of *Tetrastigma serrulatum* was determined to have nutritive values similar to many cultivated fruits (Bajracharya, 1980). Therefore, a possible means of dispersal for this plant may be through wild birds and mammals.

Potential Threat:

No information about how weedy this plant is was available from the literature, however, it seems to possess some characteristics of a weedy plant. *Tetrastigma* species have a high growth rate and its ability to propagate vegetatively are signs for caution. Shading-out trees and breaking branches are a possibility. The vines grow from the ground and high into trees, suggesting that it could act as a fire ladder and change ground fires into tree crown fires. Dispersal of its fruit by animals could add to its threat. However, it has not yet shown itself to be a significant weed.

References:

1. Bajracharya, D. 1980. Nutritive Values of Nepalese Edible Wild Fruits. *Z. Lebensm. Unters. Forsch.* 171:363-366.
2. Dick, H. 1994. *Australian Plants* vol. 17:259-260.