

bittersweet

Against the browns of autumn, bittersweet gives dashes of color to the woods of the Eastern United States. The bright orange capsules burst open when touched by frost.

Bittersweet is a treelike vine. It twines its woody stem about trees with great strength, sometimes killing young saplings. It may twist its own stems into a strong rope. The small creamy-white flowers appear in June. The scarlet berries develop in September.

If they are gathered on the branches and allowed to dry before frost, they become hard and retain their fresh color all winter. Good conservation practices should be used in cutting the branches. If all the berries are taken, the plant is destroyed. Bittersweet belongs to the staff-tree family, Celastraceae. Its scientific name is *Celastrus scandens*.

Bittersweet nightshade is a totally different vine. It is a member of the nightshade family, Solanaceae, to which the potato also belongs. It bears drooping clusters of blue or purplish flowers shaped like potato blossoms but much smaller. The bright red berries are poisonous. The plant grows in swamps and moist woods from Nova Scotia to Minnesota and south to New Jersey and Kansas. Its scientific name is *Solanum dulcamara*.

Cite

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"bittersweet." *Britannica School*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 7 Dec. 2019.
school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/bittersweet/273236. Accessed 16 Dec. 2019.