

NEW ENGLAND NOTE

ACTINIDIA ARGUTA (ACTINIDIACEAE): A NEW RECORD
OF A NATURALIZED INTRODUCTION IN CONNECTICUT

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Actinidia arguta (Siebold & Zuch.) Planch. ex Mich. is a large, deciduous, polymorphic liana considered native to a wide geographic region spanning eastern Russia, Korea, Japan, and much of China (Ferguson and Huang 2007). The species is known in the United States by a variety of common names (e.g., “hardy kiwi,” “kiwi berry,” “Bowerberry,” “Tara vine,” “Siberian gooseberry,” etc.). *Actinidia arguta* was first introduced as cuttings to the U.S. from Japan in 1876 (Penhallow 1884). Along with *A. polygama* (Siebold & Zucc.) Maxim., the species was being grown throughout New England, primarily as an ornamental vine, by the 1890’s (Anonymous 1893; Anonymous 1895; Orpet 1892; Sargent 1893) and became very popular in estate plantings.

Like all *Actinidia* species, *A. arguta* appears to be functionally dioecious, though gender inconstancy has been observed within the species (Hirsch et al. 1990). Since the genetic mechanism of dioecy is thought to have evolved prior to speciation and polyploidization, the many different gender phenotypes observed within the related and much better-studied commercial fruit species, *A. deliciosa* (A. Chev.) C.F. Liang & A.R. Ferguson, are likely present within *A. arguta* as well: male, fruiting male, neuter, female, inconstant female, and hermaphrodite (McNeilage 1997). *Actinidia arguta* was valued in the U.S. originally for its ornamental characteristics around homes and in botanical gardens; so it is believed that most of the original plants established in New England up through the mid-20th century were selected for their vegetative characteristics.