

Russian olive

Elaeagnus angustifolia

Description

Forms a dense, monospecific shrub layer displacing native species and closing open areas; alters nutrient cycling and hydrology.

Habit

Deciduous thorny shrub or small tree growing up to 9 m (30 feet) in height; rounded in shape with a loose arrangement of branches.

Leaves

Simple, alternate, oblong, 4-8 cm (1.5-3 in) long, untoothed margins; light green and covered with silvery star-shaped hairs above, silvery white and densely covered with scales below.

Stems

Slightly thorny on ends; silvery scales present when young; bark is thin and comes off in elongated strips.

Flowers

Small, highly aromatic, yellowish in color, silver





inside, umbel-shaped, single or clustered, blooms shortly after leaf emergence; blooms June through July.

Fruits and Seeds

Hard, yellow-red, olive-shaped fruits, 1 cm (0.4 in) long with silvery scales, clustered along stems in great quantities, eaten and dispersed by many bird species; begin fruiting at 3 to 5 years.

Habitat

Relatively shade tolerant; invades open and disturbed areas; can occur in a variety of soil and moisture conditions; not tolerant of acidic conditions (pH<6.0).

Reproduction

Primarily by seed, also vegetatively or by root sucker at the root crown.

Similar

Non-native autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) has shorter, broader, slightly less silvery leaves; closely related native rabbit-berry and buffalo-berry (*Shepherdia* spp.) have opposite leaves, usually smaller; sage willow (*Salix candida*) has serrate leaves.

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Monitor edge habitats, particularly along streams and rivers; early detection is critical as large stands are almost impossible to eradicate. Hand pull seedlings; small seedlings susceptible to fire. Burning, mowing, cutting and girdling all stimulate resprouting in larger plants without herbicide treatment; treat cut stumps with an herbicide; basal bark treatment effective on young trees; foliar herbicide treatment effective for small trees, resprouts.

Credits

The Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) has partnered with MISIN to provide the information

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