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Autumn Olive

Elaeagnus umbellata



Habit: Deciduous shrub or small tree growing up to 6 m (20 ft) in height and 9 m (30 ft) wide.

Leaves: Simple, alternate, oval, 5-10 cm (2-4 in) long; margins entire, wavy; gray-green above, silvery scaly below; early leaf out (mid-March).

Stems/bark: Often thorny; silvery or golden brown, with brownish scales giving stems a speckled appearance.

Flowers: Fragrant; tubular; 4 petals and stamens; cream to light yellow; in clusters of 1-8; bloom from April to June.

Fruits/seeds: Drupe, 0.6 cm (0.25 in) in diameter; silvery with brown scales when immature, speckled red or yellow when mature; ripen September to October; begin to bear fruit at 3 to 5 years; each tree can produce 2-8 lbs. of seed per year; fruit eaten and seed dispersed by birds.

Habitat: Moderately shade tolerant; occurs in a variety of soil types (pH range of 4.8-6.5), thrives on infertile soils because of nitrogen-fixing root nodules; found in open woods, forest edges, roadsides, fence rows, meadows, sand dunes, and other disturbed areas.

Reproduction: By seed; also by root sprouting.

Similar species: Related invasive Russian olive (*E. angustifolia*) has longer, narrower, leaves, silver above and below.

Comments: Native to Asia. Invades disturbed areas, can out-compete native species; increases soil nitrogen levels which facilitates expansion of weedy and/or invasive species; had been widely recommended for conservation planting until invasive traits became apparent.

Monitoring & rapid response: Monitor sunny open sites; autumn olive leafs out early in spring, retains leaves in fall, can be recognized year-round. Hand pull seedlings; focus on newest infestations and highest quality areas first; cutting, girdling and burning are ineffective unless used in conjunction with herbicide as they stimulate sprouting; basal bark/stem sprays effective in late spring; basal stem injection of herbicide on dormant plants provides excellent control with low concentrations of herbicide. This species is difficult to control—research control options thoroughly.