
Autumn Olive

Elaeagnus umbellata

Identification:

Large shrub/small tree up to 20 feet tall. The alternately arranged leaves are dark green with a silver underside. Twigs are grey/green to brown with fine hairs. Small, inconspicuous yellow flowers give rise to dark red fruits resembling tiny olives. The fruit is extremely bitter and eaten by wildlife only in winter when other food is scarce.

Origin: East Asia

Habitat:

Grows in a variety of conditions. It can tolerate almost complete shade when mature, and is drought tolerant. When in full sun, it produces huge amounts of viable seed which is spread in winter by birds.

Ecological Threat:

Autumn olive can adapt to a wide variety of conditions, and has an extremely fast growth rate when compared to native shrubs. It can quickly invade sparse woodlands, grassland, and roadsides and crowd out all other native plant life. It also has nitrogen-fixing nodules in its root system, which allows it to invade areas with poor soil. It is also a pest in disturbed areas.

Native alternatives:

Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), pictured below

Arrowwood viburnum (*Viburnum dentatum*)

Silky dogwood (*Cornus amomum*)



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