

Weed Information Sheet:

common privet

Ligustrum vulgare

Oleaceae (Olive family)

Identification:

Uncommon Perennial shrub, deciduous Height: 3-20' Width: 2-10' Leaf Arrangement: opposite
Flower: Cream, White Blooms: Early summer Fruit: Black berry Fall Color: Green

Common privet is a shrub which can grow up to 20 ft. tall with an upright, spreading form and dense, leafy branches. Mature shrubs are multi-stemmed. Leaves are glossy and leathery, oval to egg-shaped and mostly evergreen. Small, white to cream, fragrant flowers bloom at the ends of branches from April to June. The leaves and spherical, dark purplish black berries persist into the winter months. Reproduces by seed and root sprouts. The two species of invasive privet are relatively difficult to distinguish, however, the young twigs of border privet (*Ligustrum obtusifolium*) tend to be considerably hairy.



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AKA:



Description & Impact:

Privet is a semi-evergreen shrub in the olive family that was introduced from Europe and Asia in the mid-1800's as an ornamental hedgerow plant. Of the several different varieties introduced into the U.S., the common and border privet are the species known to escape from cultivation in the Midwest. This invasive plant thrives in moist, rich soil conditions of low-lying woodland openings, abandoned fields and fencerows where it can spread into forests and form dense thickets. The thicket-forming shrub quickly out-competes native understory tree species and is hard to control once established in an area. Seeds are spread widely by birds. All parts of plant are toxic to humans and mammalian herbivores.

Control Methods:

Cut and Treat: The most effective control method is to cut each stem as close to the ground as is practical, and immediately treat the stump with concentrated herbicide at the rate recommended on the product label. Glyphosate (Round-Up®, etc.) mixed 1:1 in water is effective and has the lowest potential for negative impacts to surrounding vegetation. On very cold winter days or early-spring a solution of triclopyr (Garlon® 4, etc.) in mineral oil may be more effective. It is best to apply the herbicide to the cut stumps immediately after cutting so as not to lose track of them.

Basal bark treatment with triclopyr in oil is effective and time-efficient when dealing with large numbers of small stems. Always read herbicide labels carefully before use and always apply according to the instruction on the product label.

Critical Period Cutting: A new technique to control invasive shrubs is called critical period cutting. This involves cutting the plants multiple times, with the first cut being between chest-height and just below the height of the lowest leaves. This initial cutting should be done in mid-May when the shrub have fully leafed-out and the plant's energy reserves are at their lowest. With this initial cut, also remove any lower branches that contain leaves. Follow-up in mid-September by stripping the newly sprouting branches either by hand or with hand pruners or a small electric saw. Monitor the plants the following growing season, and if necessary, repeat this stripping again after leaf-out in the spring and again in early-fall.

Pulling: Saplings (less than 1/4" in diameter) can be hand pulled in loose or moist soils. Larger individuals may be removed with the aid of a Weed Wrench. But consider the effects of soil disturbance and erosion when uprooting plants, especially on slopes.

Prescribed fire will prevent the establishment of this species and help control seedlings, but will not kill established plants.

Citations: