

Impacts: Autumn olive is known to invade grasslands, fields, open woodlands and disturbed areas. Its aggressive growth helps it to out-compete and displace native plant species, creating dense shade and interfering with nutrient cycling. Due to autumn olive's capability of fixing nitrogen in its roots, it can grow on bare mineral substrates. It is also believed that it keeps migrating birds in the area longer because of its late fruiting season, though its seeds do not provide them with the proper nutrition.



Suspected Means of Introduction: Autumn olive was introduced into the United States in 1830 and is widely used as an ornamental shrub. In Pennsylvania, it was planted in game lands for wildlife habitat, windbreaks and restoring deforested and degraded lands.

BioBullies

Autumn Olive

Elaeagnus umbellata



Description: Autumn olive is a deciduous shrub that grows up to 30 feet tall. The leaves of autumn olive are distinctive and can easily be identified by their dark green top and shiny, silver underside. The lance-shaped leaves alternate along the glossy, olive, drab branches and main stems. The stems are also covered with many whitish-colored dots called lenticels and may be scattered with thorns. The small, aromatic flowers of the plant are yellow and do not appear until reaching three years of age. The edible autumn olive fruits also do not appear until the third year and are small oval shaped berries that are red in color with golden speckles.

Autumn Olive

Elaeagnus umbellata

Native Range:
Eastern Asia

Resources for Identification and Control of Autumn Olive

Headwaters Invasive
Plant Partnership

University of Illinois
Extension covering
Champaign, Ford,
Iroquois, and Vermilion
counties

Plant Profile Database -
USDA

Weed of the Week -
USDA Forest Service

Midwest Invasive Plant
Network



Habitat: Autumn olive grows well in disturbed areas and open fields, as well as next to forests, roadsides, and clearings. Autumn olive is drought-tolerant and does not grow well in wet areas. This deciduous shrub will also stay out of dense forest, where sunlight is minimal.

Biology: Autumn olive is dispersed mainly by birds and mammals dropping the seeds. Each plant produces 20,000 to 54,000 seeds per year. It can also reproduce through the roots

open areas and can spread very quickly throughout forest edges.

Control Methods: Young autumn olive plants can be hand-pulled, making sure to remove all roots. Cutting, in combination with herbicide application, is effective. Hedges can be cut down using a brush-type mower or chain saw, followed by a stump treatment using an herbicide like glyphosate or triclopyr. When using herbicide, read the label and follow all state and federal requirements.