

KENTUCKY'S LEAST WANTED! PLANTS 2013

AUTUMN OLIVE



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LESLIE J. NEHRHOFF

RUSSIAN OLIVE



JOHN M. RANDALL

Autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) is a thorny-branched deciduous shrub growing up to 20 feet. It has bright green to gray green leaves with silvery, speckled undersides. Leaves are alternate, 2 to 3 inches long and 1 inch wide with entire and wavy margins. Clusters of small, pale yellow tubular flowers are abundant from mid to late spring. Fruits are red and spotted with silvery scales. Each fruit has

one seed, ripening in the fall. Autumn olive invades old fields, woodland edges, and other disturbed areas. It can form a dense shrub layer which displaces native species and closes open areas. Autumn olive is native to China and Japan and was introduced into North America in 1830. It has been widely planted for wildlife habitat, mine reclamation and shelterbelts. It is a nitrogen fixer and can thrive on very

poor soils. The closely related **Russian olive** (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) is less common in Kentucky but is quite invasive in western states. Russian olive differs by growing larger (a small tree to 30 feet), having narrow willow-like foliage that is silvery above and below, silvery stems, and much larger olive shaped fruit that is yellow-brown with silvery surface scales.

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES



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COMMON ELDERBERRY

(*Sambucus canadensis*) is a 5-12 foot suckering shrub native to the eastern U.S. While it is often found along streams and in wet ditches, it tolerates a variety of soils and grows in full sun to partial shade. In the summer, it produces cymes of white flowers 6-10 inches across that attract a variety of pollinators. Dark purple to black berries form by September, providing food for songbirds, small mammals, and people who use them for jams and wine. Once established, it is fairly low maintenance, and can be cut back to maintain its boundary.

BLACK CHOKEBERRY

(*Aronia melanocarpa*) is a multi-stemmed shrub native to most of the eastern U.S. It grows to about 6 feet tall, occasionally 10 feet. It will grow in most garden soils, growing best in full sun or partial shade. In May, the shrub produces clusters of white flowers often tinged with pink. Black berries follow in the fall that will persist into early winter if not eaten by birds. The leaves turn shades of dark red and purple in the fall. This shrub establishes well from container stock, is resistant to pests, and tolerant of drought and pollution. The shrub naturally spreads by suckers so it is best utilized in clumps or along borders.

BLACKHAW VIBURNUM

(*Viburnum prunifolium*) is a large, deciduous shrub that often reaches mature heights of 15-20 feet; it can grow taller if pruned as a tree and given extra care. Blackhaw is native to much of the eastern U.S., but its distribution becomes more scattered in the southern states. It grows best in moist, well-drained soils but will tolerate drier sites. In late spring, it produces 2-4 inch white flower clusters followed by bluish fruit that peak in early fall. When grown in full sun, blackhaw can flower heavily and produce showy red to purplish fall color, proving that many native plants are as colorful as non-natives in the landscape.

To heighten awareness of invasive plants that threaten Kentucky's native biodiversity, a Least Wanted plant will be featured in the Spring of each year with suggested alternatives.

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PROMOTING ALTERNATIVES
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