

Invasive Alien Plant Species of Virginia

Chinese Privet (*Ligustrum sinense*)

Description

A member of the olive family, Chinese privet is a shrub which can grow to twelve feet in height. Leaves are oval or elliptical, two inches long, and opposite. Chinese privet is distinguished from other privets by the presence of fine hairs on the twigs and underside of leaves. Small, white, four-petaled flowers grow in clusters at the ends of branches. The fleshy blue fruits, less than a quarter-inch in diameter, contain a hard seed. Several other privet species have been introduced into Virginia, but none have proven as invasive as Chinese privet.

Habitat

Chinese privet prefers wet damp habitat. It is usually found in low woods, bottomlands, streamsides, and disturbed areas.

Distribution

Native to China, Chinese privet is found in Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. This plant is found throughout most of Virginia.

Threats

Chinese privet can dominate the shrub layer of an invaded habitat, thus altering species composition and natural community structure by choking out native plant species. It shades out all herbaceous

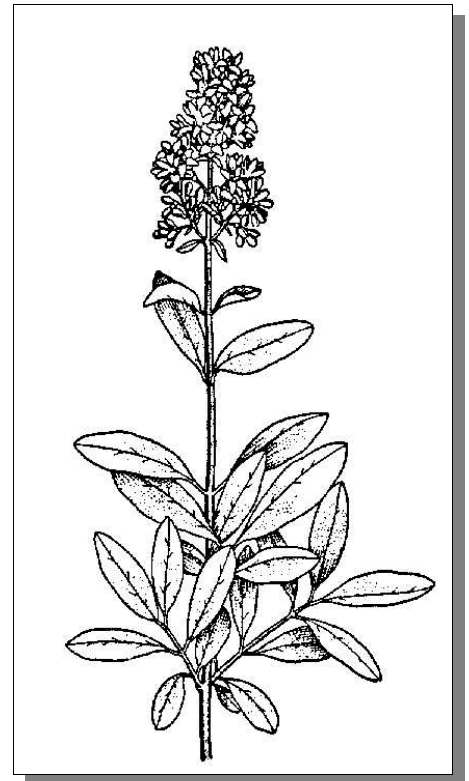
plants. Thousands of acres have been invaded by Chinese privet in North Carolina.

Control

Controlling plants by hand is effective for plants with stems one inch or less in diameter. The entire root must be removed. Mechanical methods such as cutting or plowing will result in an increase of growth.

Chinese privet can be controlled with use of a glyphosate herbicide. Glyphosate herbicides are recommended because they are biodegradable. However, glyphosate is a nonselective systemic herbicide that affects all green vegetation. To be safe and effective herbicide use requires careful knowledge of the chemicals, appropriate concentrations, and the effective method and timing of their application. For Chinese privet, a foliar application in late summer is recommended. To avoid killing desirable plant species, spray in late fall after most natives have dropped their leaves. A combination of cutting followed immediately by application of glyphosate to the stump is reported to be the most effective in ensuring control.

For more information on native plant conservation, contact the



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Virginia Native Plant Society at the address below. For information on Virginia's natural areas and natural heritage resources contact the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Division of Natural Heritage (see address below).

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For more information, contact the Department of Conservation and Recreation or the Virginia Native Plant Society.



Department of Conservation & Recreation
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