

Russian Olive

(*Elaeagnus angustifolia*)



Photo by PSU extension

UGA00081



Photo by Invasive.Org



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Photo by Eigenes Werk



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Key ID Features

Leaves: The leaves are simple, alternate, and lance shaped. They are 1-4 inches long and have silver scales on both sides.

Flowers: The flowers are fragrant, 0.5-0.6 inches wide, silvery outside, and yellow within. They appear from May to June.

Fruit: The edible fruit are 0.4 inches long, yellow, and almost completely covered by densely silver scales. The fruit contain one large seed that can be up to 0.4 inches long within.

Stem: The bark is a grayish-brown, thin with shallow fissures, and sheds in long vertical strips.



Photo by JCISM



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The Impact

These shrubs are highly competitive against native species, shading out shorter plants. Their nitrogen-fixing capabilities may adversely affect the nitrogen cycle of native communities that depend on infertile soils. Although Russian olive provides a plentiful source of berries for birds, their fruits are actually quite low in nutrients. Ecologists have found that bird species richness is higher in riparian areas dominated by native vegetation.

Quick Facts

Plant Family: Elaeagnus

Origin: Eastern Europe and western Asia

Habitat: Riverbanks, roadsides, and disturbed areas.

Present in Vermont?: Yes, but not widespread.

Method of Spread: Bird-dispersed seeds and root suckers.



Common Look-alike

Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)



Distinguishing features:

Leaves have silvery sheen only on the underside of foliage. Fruit is red, the autumn olive is also prolific introduced species in Vermont.

Native Plant Alternatives



Downy Serviceberry
(*Amelanchier arborea*)

Serviceberry is a vital shrub to wildlife, providing edible berries, habitat, and erosion control.



Choke Cherry
(*Prunus Virginiana*)

Edible fruits great for jams/wine, as well as edible for wildlife. Great pollinator and erosion control.

Control Information

To learn more about identification & control options, check out the Gallery of Land Invasives on VTinvasives.org and these additional resources:

[Ohio state extension olive control](#), [Weed report](#)

References: [Penn state Extension](#) [Jefferson County Colorado](#), [California DFW](#)