

INVASIVE EXOTICS

Common Privet

Ligustrum vulgare

Olive Family (Oleaceae)



What does it look like? Common privet, native to Europe, is a stout, many branched, deciduous shrub that can grow up to 15 ft. in height. The leaves have short stalks, are smooth on the underside and grow opposite each other on the stem. The white flowers are produced in clusters from May through June.

What habitats are threatened by this plant? An extremely aggressive plant, common privet invades river bottoms, open woods, fencerows, and roadsides. Common privet can form dense, impenetrable thickets due to its suckering nature. The thickets are so thick that they crowd out more desirable plants.

How does this plant spread? Common privet was introduced from Europe in the middle of the 20th century as a garden plant. It is a prolific producer of seed that is sought after by birds, who in turn spread the seeds far from the original planting. Privet also spreads by root suckers. Since its escape from cultivation, common privet has spread throughout the eastern half of the United States.

How can it be controlled? First, do not plant privet in the landscape. In cultivated areas, such as gardens, small plants can be dug out. This method however is nearly impossible with larger plants. For these, chemical control with a glyphosate herbicide, such as Roundup, is most effective. Spraying herbicide on the foliage is best for actively growing plants. For freshly cut stumps, painting on herbicide is most effective. Great native plants to substitute for the privet are inkberry (*Ilex glabra*) and plum-leaved viburnum (*Viburnum prunifolium*).

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