

TORONTO MASTER GARDENER

INVASIVE PLANTS FACT SHEETS

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RUSSIAN OLIVE

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SUPPORTED BY
THE INVASIVE SPECIES CENTRE



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Photo: Helen

Photo: Helen Battersby



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RUSSIAN OLIVE

(Elaeagnus angustifolia)

WHAT IS RUSSIAN OLIVE

Russian olive is a deciduous tree or shrub native to southern Europe and found from central to western Asia, primarily found on coasts, riparian, and other moist habitats. It thrives in a variety of soil and moisture conditions and can withstand competition from other shrubs and trees and as well as heavy flooding, saline conditions, and drought. Despite being thorny, it is valued as an ornamental for the silvery colour of its leaves and fruits and fragrant flowers.

WHY IS RUSSIAN OLIVE A PROBLEM

Russian olive invades riparian systems where it outcompetes native vegetation, interferes with natural plant succession and nutrient cycling, taxes water reserves and reduces species diversity. It spreads vegetatively by sprouting from the root crown and sending up root suckers. Seed production is high and seeds remain viable for up to three years and germinate in a broad range of soil types. Seeds are dispersed by water as well as by birds and small mammals which eat the fruit.

IDENTIFICATION

Leaves are alternate, simple, egg or lance shaped with smooth margins.



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Bark is thin with shallow fissures and exfoliates into long strips. Branch tips have a short thorn.



Stems, buds, and leaves have a dense covering of silvery to rusty scales.



Flowers occur in summer and are creamy yellow with four petals, 1 cm long and a spicy aroma.



Fruits are silvery drupes (fleshy with a central stone).



MANAGEMENT FOR THE TORONTO GARDENER

Do not plant this tree. Small plants may be removed by hand pulling or digging. Russian olive is difficult to control once established. Stump sprouting commonly occurs and stump excavation can trigger root sprouting. Where larger plants are removed the site should be monitored and sprouts removed until carbohydrate reserves are exhausted.

Dispose of non-reproductive plant parts with yard waste. Reproductive plant parts should be placed in the garbage.

If you see Russian olive or other invasive species in the wild, please contact the Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711, or visit [EDDMapS Ontario](http://EDDMapS.Ontario) to report a sighting.

ALTERNATIVE NATIVE PLANTS

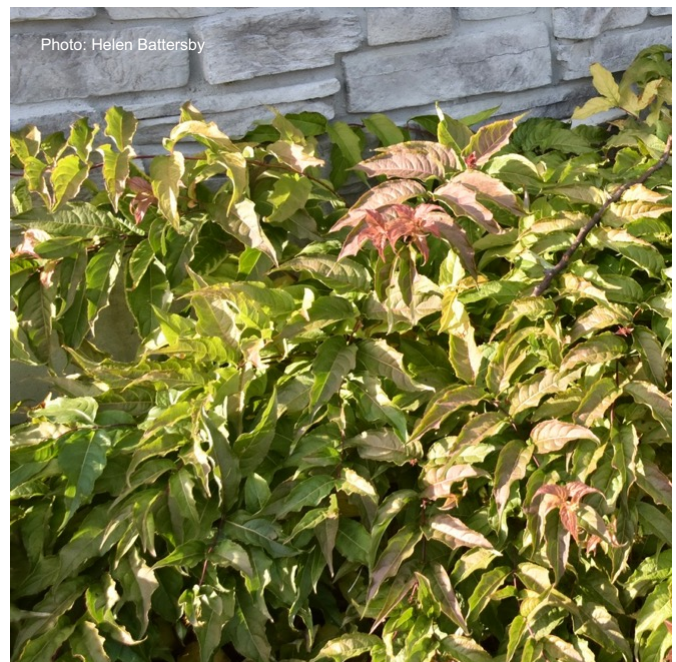
Shrubs native to Ontario, and thornless, that might be confused with Russian olive (and could be used as beautiful alternatives) include:



CANADA BUFFALOBERRY
(*Shepherdia canadensis*)



SILVERBERRY
(*Elaeagnus commutata*)



NORTHERN BUSH HONEYSUCKLE
(*Diervilla lonicera*)

REFERENCES

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Zouhar, Kris. (2005.) *Elaeagnus angustifolia*. In: Fire Effects Information System, [Online]. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fire Sciences Laboratory (Producer). Accessed online at: <https://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/tree/elaang/all.html>

PHOTO CREDIT

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