

AUTUMN OLIVE

(ELAEAGNUS UMBELLATA)

2019 Status in Maine:

Localized. Very Invasive. Perennial deciduous shrub. Tall and wide with many branches. Originates in China, Korea, Pakistan, and Japan.

Identify

Leaves: Alternate, taper at both ends. Leaf edges are entire but may be wavy. Underside is silvery and leaves are covered with silver and brown scales.

Flowers: Small, tubular, white/yellow, 4 petals. Grow in small clusters where leaves meet stem. Bloom from May-June.

Fruit: Roundish with silver scales on surface. Immature fruits are brown, changing from yellow, orange, to red by September.

Bark: Twigs bare silver and/or brown scales and sometimes have long, woody spines.

Location

This plant prefers sun but can germinate in shade. Able to grow in low nutrient soils but does not tolerate wet soils. Can be found in fields, roadsides, forest edges, and fragmented forests.

Parks of concern: Wainwright, Bug Light Park, Willard Beach.

Problem

It can grow in dense thickets that crowd and shade out native plants. It also has the ability to fix nitrogen in the soil, which can disrupt the natural nutrient cycle.

How it spreads: The fruits are eaten and distributed by birds and small mammals.

Management

Small plants can be pulled when the soil is moist. Larger shrubs can be cut, but this must be done several times during the growing season for several years as the plant can re-sprout. Care should be taken to dry or burn all plant parts before disposal.



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