

Autumn Olive

Eleagnus umbellata

Oleaster, Russian Olive

A very hardy, disease resistant, and easy to grow large shrub, Autumn Olive produces large quantities of edible and attractive bright red berries. The fruit is high in lycopenes which are reported to help prevent prostate and other cancers. It is estimated that Autumn Olive fruit has 17 times more lycopene by weight than tomatoes. Bees love its fragrant flowers and birds relish the fruit. Autumn Olive is known as a nitrogen fixer. It is not native and in some eastern states is considered invasive. Autumn Olive is native to Asia and introduced into the United States in the 1830s. It remains an important wildlife resource, providing both food and habitat.



Identification

Leaves

Deciduous, alternate, generally oval in shape, approximately 1-3 inches without serrations. Dark to grayish green above, silvery white scales beneath.



Bark/Wood



Flower/Fruit

Monoecious; profuse, small, light yellow flowers in May after first leaves appear. 1/4 inch fleshy fruits, red, borne in small clusters along the branches.



Form

Medium to large shrub, reaching heights of 20 feet without pruning. Naturally roundish habit, taller than it is wide.



Uses

Primarily grown for its fruit, attractive to wildlife and quite suitable for juices and jellies. Also grown as a nitrogen fixing partner.

Ethnobotany

Originally imported as a windbreak and livestock hedge for the prairies.

Native Distribution

Asia - Japan, China, and Korea.

Establishment

As it is considered invasive in some areas, take care when planting.

Growing Conditions and Culture

Mature Size 20'Hx15'W
 USDA Zone 4-9
 Light Requirements Full Sun

Soils Diverse
 Drought Tolerant? Moderate
 Inundation Tolerant? Moderate

Pests/Damaging Agents

No damaging pests.

Similar Species

Russian Olive
 Russian Olive has small thorns and yellowish fruits.

Propagation

Seeds - cold stratify. Semi-ripe cuttings - autumn.
 Hardwood cuttings - winter.

Source(s)

Transplants from Northwoods Nursery, Molalla, OR.