



Russian-Olive

Elaeagnus angustifolia L.



DESCRIPTION: Russian-olive is a small, thorny shrub or small tree that can grow to 30 feet in height. Its stems, buds, and leaves have a dense covering of silvery to rusty scales. Plants begin to flower and fruit at three years of age. Highly aromatic, creamy yellow flowers appear in June and July and are later replaced by clusters of abundant silvery fruits.

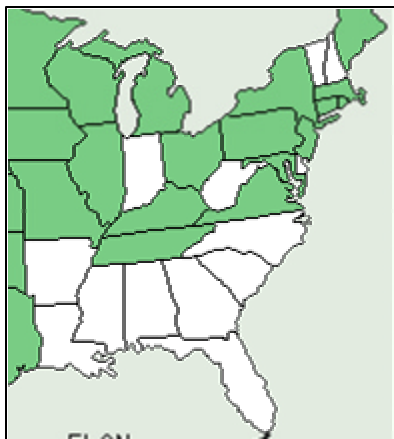
ECOLOGICAL THREAT POSED BY PLANT:

Russian-olive can interfere with natural plant succession, nutrient cycling, and tax water reserves.



Because Russian-olive is capable of fixing nitrogen in its roots, it can grow on bare, mineral substrates and dominate riparian vegetation where overstory cottonwoods have died. Although Russian-olive provides a plentiful source of edible fruits for birds, ecologists have found that bird species richness is actually higher in riparian areas dominated by native vegetation.

DISTRIBUTION IN THE UNITED STATES:



Russian-olive is on the State noxious weed lists for 35 states. It is found primarily in the central and western U.S., as well as in the East (e.g., Virginia to Pennsylvania), where it occurs with its exotic partner, autumn-olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*). In the West, Russian-olive occurs mainly in the Great Basin Desert region at 800-2000 feet elevation and is also abundant in riparian zones of the Great Plains, for example, the Platte River in Nebraska.

HABITAT IN THE UNITED STATES: Russian-olive is found along streams, fields and open areas. Seedlings are tolerant of shade and it thrives in a variety of soil and moisture conditions, including bare mineral substrates.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT APPROACHES: Mowing hedges with a brush type mower, followed by removal of cut material may be the most effective method for eradication. Herbivorous animals are not known to feed on it and few insects seem to utilize or bother it. Canker disease is occasionally a problem but not enough to be useful as a control agent.

