

Scientific Name: *Ligustrum spp.*

Common Name: Privet

Updated: 5/5/2016

A. Priority: B

Description – Privet is an evergreen or semi-evergreen, multi-stemmed perennial shrub that is native to China and Europe. It was introduced to the United States in the early to mid-1800s as an ornamental, especially in the southern US, and was favored because of its fast growth and its suitability for hedgerows and along fences. The leaves are thin and ovate to elliptic, with entire margins, but the rounded tip is often minutely indented. The leaves are opposite, and from near right angles to the stem and are leathery and thick, usually less than 2.5 inches long, with a lustrous green color above and pale green with a hairy midvein below (Note: European does not have the hairy midvein). The leaves are usually persistent during the winter. Its stems are smooth and multi-stemmed, usually with whitish-tan to gray bark. The leaf scars are semicircular, with one bundle scar. The flowers occur from April to June as abundant, fragrant white clusters, mostly on the ends of the branches. The fruits are dense, ovoid drupes (i.e. stone fruits, like a grape) that occur from July to March. They are pale green in the summer and ripen to dark purple and appear almost black in late fall to winter.

B. Damage and threats – The species' dense growth habit displaces native vegetation, particularly low-growing herbaceous species. In extreme cases, it can form a monoculture and individual clumps can combine to form a closed canopy. Biodiversity in these sites can be quite low.

C. Management Options

Mechanical Control:

Hand pulling privet seedlings is easiest when the soil is moist and the population is small. Pull steadily and slowly to minimize soil disturbance and tamp down the soil afterwards. In small infestations, larger plants can also be removed by digging if care is taken to remove all roots.

Chemical Control: Use of a systematic herbicide is the best option to control Privet. We recommend using aquatic formulations of herbicides in this region to limit potentially unwanted effects to the surrounding environment.

- a. Foliar Spray** – This method involves spraying a dilute herbicide directly onto the plants leaves. Application needs to occur when foliage is present, sometime between full leaf and the onset of fall for full effectiveness. Caution should be taken when applying herbicide with this method as non-target plants can easily be killed by drift or overspray. Application should cover at least 80% of the leaves. To treat, use a 2-4% solution of aquatic triclopyr in water with a 0.5% non-ionic surfactant and apply

directly to leaves until just before runoff. Air temperatures must be above 65 degrees and winds should be lower than 5 mph.

- b. Cut Stump** – This method involves cutting the stump as close to the ground as possible (no more than 5in.) and immediately applying a systematic herbicide. It is best to use this method between summer and fall, but it may be used as long as the ground is not frozen. To treat using this method, apply a 50% formulation of aquatic glyphosate or triclopyr directly to the cut stump. Bag or burn all cut material as it will resprout if left on site!

- c. Basal Bark** - This method requires an oil-based herbicide and is effective year round as long as the ground is not frozen. This technique has the advantage of not requiring the physical removal of the aboveground biomass. However, it can be physically challenging and can require fairly large volumes of herbicide. It can also result in spray drift affecting non-target species. Apply a solution of 25 percent triclopyr and oil to the basal parts of the tree to a height of 12 to 16 inches from the ground during the late winter/early spring or summer. All treatments should be followed up the next year to monitor and control basal sprouts and root suckers.

D. Recommended Management Strategy

- a.** For small and or initial infestations we recommend hand pulling and or cut stump treatments as described above.
- b.** Large and mature infestations should be treated with cut stump or foliar applications as described above.
- c.** Monitoring and retreatment will be necessary for complete control.

E. Additional and Updated Information

For additional information including photographs and the most up to date control recommendations please visit www.wachng.org/Plants.