Invasive Species Alert

Autumn Olive

(*Elaegnus umbellata*)
Established in Michigan

Identification:

- Deciduous shrub that can grow to 20 feet high
- Leaves are bright green on top and distinctively silver underneath
- Spring-blooming cream or yellow flowers have a strong fragrance
- Abundant red berries are lightly speckled and easily seen in the fall
- Flowers arranged in spikes near the end of the stem are small, numerous, and creamy white in color
- Flowers bloom in August and September in Michigan

Chris Evans, Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, Bugwood.org

Habitat: Autumn olive is moderately shade tolerant and occurs on a variety of soil types. It spreads rapidly in old fields and is also found in open woods, along forest edges, roadsides, sand dunes, and other disturbed areas. It poses a particular threat to prairies, savannas and open woods.

James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Native Range: Asia

U.S. Distribution: Autumn olive is widespread throughout Michigan and the Eastern United States. Smaller populations exist in Washington and Oregon.

Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

Local Concern: Historically planted for wildlife food and habitat, autumn olive has been found to be highly aggressive, with seeds widely dispersed by birds and mammals. Autumn olive can shade out desirable native plants and fixes nitrogen in the soil, which can degrade native plant communities that thrive on low-nutrient soils. It is difficult to control, as cut stumps and roots will resprout.

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