Invasive Species Alert

BURNING BUSH

(EUONYMUS ALATUS)

DETECTED IN MICHIGAN

IDENTIFICATION:

- Medium to large multi-stemmed shrub.
- Stems often with multiple brown, corky ridges, especially as the plant ages.
- Leaves are pointed ovals with fine serrations and are usually bright red in fall.
- Fruits are red-brown leathery capsules that split open to show a bright orange fleshy aril.

HABITAT: Commonly planted in formal landscapes, often escaping into forests and forest edges.

NATIVE RANGE: Asia.

U.S. DISTRIBUTION: Escaped from cultivation throughout the eastern U.S., particularly in woodlands near plantings but ranging further as the seeds are spread by wildlife.

MICHIGAN DISTRIBUTION: In forests and fields throughout Michigan, especially near cities and homes.

LOCAL CONCERN: Burning bush outcompetes native plants and can create thickets of shrubs that aren't part of the food web for insects, deer and other wildlife. The plant is toxic to many animals, particularly in large quantities.

MEANS OF INTRODUCTION OR SPREAD: Outcompetes native plants and creates thickets of shrubs that aren't part of the food web.

NATIVE LOOK-ALIKES: American wahoo (*Euonymus atropurpureus*) has smooth-edged leaves that are fuzzy underneath; stems lack corky ridges; fruits have pink capsules. Other species may have corky ridges but different leaf shapes.

REPORT THIS SPECIES: Visit MISIN.MSU.edu or download the MISIN smartphone app and report it from your phone.

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