

DEDHAM'S LEAST WANTED!

Autumn-olive, *Elaeagnus umbellate*



Origin: Autumn-olive is native to eastern Asia and was introduced to the United States for ornamental cultivation in the 1800s. It now grows in most northeastern and upper midwestern states. Since then, it has been widely planted for wildlife habitat, mine reclamation, and shelterbelts.

Identification/Habitat: Autumn-olive is a deciduous shrub that may reach between 3 to 20 feet in height. The shrub has alternate, elliptical leaves with a silver underside. The bark is olive drab with many white lenticels and the branches contain many thorns. Five to 10 tubular, silver, or yellow flowers appear between February and June. During August to November, red berries mature. Autumn-olive is shade tolerant but prefers dry sites. The shrub first appears along forest edges and openings, eventually forming dense stands throughout the forest understory.

Dispersal: This species produces large amounts of fruit, which are readily consumed and dispersed by birds. In New England, autumn-olive has escaped from cultivation and is progressively invading natural areas. It is a particular threat to open and semi-open areas.

Problems: Autumn-olive re-sprouts vigorously after fire or cutting. Over time, colonies of these shrubs can grow thick enough to crowd out native plants. Highway plantings of these high-fruiting species lure birds close to fast traffic, contributing to high mortality rates for some species of birds. The nitrogen-fixing capabilities of these species can interfere with the nitrogen cycle of native communities that may depend on infertile soils. Autumn-olive can tolerate poor soil conditions and may alter the processes of natural succession.



Control: Young seedlings, with stem 2 inches or less in diameter, can be dug up and removed as long as care is taken to remove the entire root system as the plant can regrow from just a root fragment.

Any removal within 100 feet of wetland resource areas, including certified vernal pools, or within 200 feet of a perennial stream may require approval from the Dedham Conservation Commission. Please contact the Conservation Department *before* you begin!