

Privet

PLANT: Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*) and European privet (*L. vulgare*) are essentially indistinguishable except at flowering, with Chinese privet being the most common.

IDENTIFICATION: Thicket forming shrubs to 30 feet tall, semi-evergreen, soft woody, multi-stemmed, long, leafy branches.

Opposite or whorled branches, branching increases upward, twigs long slender and projecting outward at near right-angles. Branches are brownish gray and short hairy (rusty or grayish) with light dots (lenticels), becoming gray-green, leaf scars raised half-circular with one bundle scar, bark brownish-gray to gray and slightly rough (not fissured).

Leaves are opposite in two rows at near right-angle to stem, ovate to elliptic, 0.8-1.6 in. long and 0.4-1.2 in. wide, margins entire, tip rounded (often minutely indented), lustrous green above and pale green. Chinese privet leaves are hairy beneath. Japanese privet (*Ligustrum japonicum*) has larger leaves than the other two privets.



FLOWERS: Abundant, white, fragrant flowers appear April - June. Pale green fruits appear in October – February, ripening to dark purple appearing almost black in late fall.

ECOLOGY: Although a traditional ornamental shrub, it is now an aggressive and troublesome invasive species. Shade tolerant. It forms dense thickets, particularly in bottomland forests, and along fencerows, gaining access to forests, fields, and rights-of-way. Colonizes by rootsprouts; spreads by abundant seeds dispersed widely by birds and other animals.

HERBICIDE CONTROL: Apply a glyphosate herbicide as a 3% solution (12 ounces per 3-gal. mix) or Arsenal AC as a 1% solution (4 ounces per 3-gal. mix) in water with a surfactant to thoroughly wet all leaves in April to November. For stems too tall for foliar sprays, apply Garlon 4 as a 20% solution (2 quarts per 3-gal. mix) in commercially available basal oil, diesel fuel, or kerosene with a penetrant (check with herbicide distributor) to young bark as a basal spray. Alternatively, cut large stems and immediately treat stumps with Arsenal AC, Chopper, or Velpar L as 10% solutions (1 quart per 3-gal. mix) in water with a surfactant (can damage plants with roots in treated zone). When safety to surrounding vegetation is a concern, immediately treat stumps and cut stems with a glyphosate herbicide or Garlon 3A as 20% solutions (2 quarts per 3-gal. mix) in water with a surfactant.

Source: Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests, James Miller, 2003

Photo Credit: Ted Bodner, Southern Weed Science Society, www.forestryimages.org