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## Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas

Swearingen, J., K. Reshetiloff, B. Slattery, and S. Zwicker. 2002. Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas. National Park Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 82 pp.

### Winged Burning Bush

*Euonymus alata*

**Origin:** Northeastern Asia, Japan and Central China

#### Background

Introduced for use as an ornamental plant for landscaping beginning about 1860. Widely planted by landscape professionals and homeowners for its fall color, dark green leaves, winged stems and other characteristics.

#### Distribution and Ecological Threat

In the United States, winged burning bush is found from New England to northern Florida and the Gulf Coast and also in Illinois. It threatens a variety of habitats including forests, coastal scrublands and prairies where it forms dense thickets, displacing many native woody and herbaceous plant species. Hundreds of seedlings are often found below



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the parent plant in what is termed a "seed shadow."

#### Description and Biology

- Plant: multiple stemmed, angular branching shrub with conspicuously winged stems, normally 5 to 10 feet high but mature plants can grow to 20 feet.
- Leaves: deciduous, dark green, in pairs along stem, turn brilliant red-purple in autumn.
- Flowers, fruits and seeds: inconspicuous, greenish flowers occur in late spring and red-purple fruits mature during summer.
- Spreads: expands locally through vegetative reproduction and to new areas through bird dispersal of seeds.
- Look-alikes: may be confused with other species of euonymus, including our native strawberry bush, or 'hearts-a-bustin' (*Euonymus americana*), which does not have winged stems. Saplings of native sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) with winged stems may also be mistaken for winged burning bush.



Britt Slattery, USFWS

#### Prevention and Control

Do not plant winged burning bush. Manual, mechanical and chemical means are available to control established plantings. Seedlings can be pulled by hand. Shrubs can be repeatedly cut to the ground to control re-sprouts, or cut and treated with systemic herbicides like glyphosate and triclopyr.

#### Native Alternatives

**red chokeberry** (*Aronia arbutifolia*)



Both photos Britt Slattery, USFWS

**Virginia sweetspire** (*Itea virginica*)



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**mapleleaf viburnum** (*Viburnum acerifolium*)



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**highbush blueberry**  
(*Vaccinium corymbosum*)



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**silky dogwood** (*Cornus amomum*)



Chris Miller, NRCS

**fragrant or shining sumac**  
(*Rhus aromatica* or *copallina*)



*Britt Slattery, USFWS*

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