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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.

Privets

Border Privet (*Ligustrum obtusifolium*),
 Chinese Privet (*L. sinense*),
 European Privet (*L. vulgare*),
 Japanese Privet (*L. japonicum*)

Origin: Europe, China, Japan and Korea

Background

Various species of privet have been introduced to the United States as garden plants and are widely used as hedges. European privet was introduced sometime during the 1700s, obtuse-leaved privet in 1860, Japanese privet in 1945 and Chinese privet in 1952. They escaped cultivation and are now established throughout the eastern part of the country.



H. Schneider

Distribution and Ecological Threat

European privet occurs in scattered locations across the United States. Chinese and Japanese privet are found in the Southeast and Midwest. Border privet is found in most of the Northeast. Privets can invade floodplains, forests, wetlands and fields. Privets form dense thickets, out-competing native vegetation.

Description and Biology

- Plant: stout, many-branched shrubs in the olive family (Oleaceae); can grow to 15 feet tall.
- Leaves: oval to elliptical on short stalks, in pairs along stem; phenolic compounds in leaves protect against damage from insects.
- Flowers, fruits and seeds: small white flowers grow in clusters at ends of branches; fruits are small blue-black berries produced during late summer to early fall.
- Spreads: by seed dispersed by birds and other wildlife that eat the fruits and excrete seeds undamaged; can also grow from stumps and stump sprouts.

Prevention and Control

Do not plant privets. Small plants can be dug out. For larger plants, spray leaves with glyphosate herbicide or paint on freshly cut stumps.

Native Alternatives

inkberry (*Ilex glabra*)

spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)



Britt Slattery, USFWS



Chris Miller, NRCS

blackhaw (*Viburnum prunifolium*)



Chris Miller, NRCS

red or black chokeberry
(*Aronia arbutifolia* or *melanocarpa*)



Britt Slattery, USFWS

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The Bugwood Network, USDA Forest Service & USDA APHIS PPQ.
The University of Georgia - Warnell School of Forest Resources and
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences - Dept. of Entomology
Last updated on Wednesday, November 05, 2003 at 01:26 PM
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