

LEAST WANTED!

P L A N T 2 0 1 0



PRIVET *Ligustrum spp.*

Privet, introduced from Europe and Asia in 1852 as an ornamental, is becoming a rampant invader of natural areas in Kentucky. Several privet species occur and are often hard to distinguish. European privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*) and Chinese privet (*L. sinense*) commonly form dense thickets in

fields or in the understory of forests. Privet shades and out-competes many species and once established is very difficult to remove. Either deciduous or half evergreen through the winter, the foliage drops before spring. The leathery textured, glabrous leaves are less than 2.5 inches long and elliptic to

ovate in shape. The small white flowers in June-July give way to terminal clusters of fleshy black fruits that ripen in fall and persist through the winter. Privet escapes cultivation by movement of seed, which is eaten and subsequently transported by wildlife, particularly birds.

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES



RED CHOKEBERRY

(*Aronia arbutifolia*) is a multi-stemmed shrub native to much of the eastern United States that grows to a height of 10 feet. A versatile plant for the garden, it tolerates a variety of soil conditions and prefers full sun or partial shade. In May it bears clusters of small white flowers followed by bright red berries that appear in late summer and persist into early winter. The leaves turn a deep red in the fall with highlights of orange and purple. This shrub is easy to transplant and establish, while also being resistant to pests, drought, and pollution. Due to its tendency to sucker, it is best used in mass plantings or along a border.



NINEBARK

(*Physocarpus opulifolius*) is a member of the rose family. This 4 to 10 foot tall and 4 to 6 foot wide shrub grows well in full sun to part shade in dry or moist, well-drained soils. The bark is various shades of brown and gray, and slowly sheds in peeling layers (hence the name 'ninebark' for the many layers). Clusters of white flowers appear in May – June, followed by showy reddish brown capsules. Ninebark is cold hardy, relatively pest and disease free and tolerant of pruning.



AMERICAN HOLLY

(*Ilex opaca*), is the largest of the native hollies and can reach 40 to 50 feet in height and 10 to 20 feet in width. The tree prefers moist, slightly acidic soils and grows well in full sun to partial shade. The evergreen leaves are spiny-toothed, stiff and leathery. Bright red berries are borne on female plants in autumn and remain into winter, providing excellent color to the muted landscape. The fruit is a food source for winter-migrating flocks of small birds, such as cedar waxwings and American goldfinches. American holly is best as a specimen tree or in small groups.

To heighten awareness of invasive plants that threaten Kentucky's native biodiversity, a Least Wanted plant will be featured in the Spring of each year with suggested alternatives.

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