

DIRTY DOZEN DOSSIER:

PRIVET



Privet (*Ligustrum* sp.), is a genus of plants that were brought to the US from Europe and Asia by gardeners and landscapers. In this area, **Chinese privet** (*Ligustrum sinense*) is the most common type of privet found growing wild in our parks and greenways—and backyards. Privet is a fast growing plant, relatively disease-free and will quickly grow to provide a privacy screen in the landscape. The reason why Privet is fast-growing and disease-free is that it is not native and has few natural enemies like insects or fungi to keep its growth in check.

Privet is semi-evergreen to evergreen that forms thickets up to 20 feet in height. The plant has long slender branches, and leaves are opposite and glossy green on the top and pale green and sometimes hairy underside. The plant blooms in late spring, with abundant clusters of white flowers that are often fragrant. In late summer to fall, the plant will be full of dense dark purple fruit. Birds feed on the drupes and spread the invasive pest plant further.

The USDA Forest Service estimated in 2008 that **16% of Tennessee forests are covered with nonnative invasive plants**. Even in the local “natural areas,” like North Chickamauga Creek State Natural Area, up to 15% of the species are not native. Within urban areas, the news is just as bad — according to the Urban Forests of Tennessee 2009 report, **Chinese Privet is the most common urban tree species** as a percent of total tree species (10.2%). While Kudzu seems like it is everywhere in this area, **Privet actually covers almost 8 times as much area as Kudzu** (over 84,000 acres versus 10,900 acres in Tennessee forests). Privet is much more invasive in the Chattanooga area than is Kudzu. While Kudzu stays along the forest edge, Privet continues into our woodlands and wetlands, growing in dense stands that not only crowd out wildflowers and shrubs but prevent new trees from germinating and growing to replace older trees when they die.

Controlling

Thoroughly wet all leaves with one of the following herbicides in water with a surfactant (August to December): a glyphosate herbicide as a 3-percent solution (12 ounces per 3-gallon mix) or **Arsenal AC®** as a 1-percent solution (4 ounces per 3-gallon mix).

For stems too tall for foliar sprays, apply **Garlon® 4** as a 20-percent solution in commercially available basal oil, diesel fuel, or kerosene (2.5 quarts per 3-gallon mix) with a penetrant (check with herbicide distributor) to young bark as a basal spray. Or, cut large stems and immediately treat the stumps with **Arsenal AC®** or **Velpar L®** as a 10-percent solution in water (1 quart per 3-gallon mix) with a surfactant. When safety to surrounding vegetation is desired, immediately treat stumps and cut stems with **Garlon® 3A** or a glyphosate herbicide as a 20-percent solution in water (2.5 quarts per 3-gallon mix) with a surfactant.

Mechanical removal is another option but the entire plant and root ball must be removed since Privet will re-sprout vigorously if simply cut. It is almost inexhaustible.

Native Plant Alternatives

An excellent evergreen hedging plant is **Wax Myrtle** and native evergreen hollies like **American Holly** and **Yaupon holly**. Many deciduous native shrubs can also fill your landscape with flowers and fruit that support our wildlife like native **Viburnum** (Mapleleaf, Possumhaw, Arrowwood), **Virginia sweetspire**, **Clethra (Summersweet)**, **Spicebush** and **Ninebark**.

For more resources about invasive exotic plants, native plants of the southeast, and to join the Tennessee Valley Wild Ones, go to www.chattanooganatives.blogspot.com

