

twice as large and its twigs are hairless. Common Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), a European species, which is seriously invasive in cooler areas of the East Coast, may be found in Virginia. It is deciduous, has sparse hairs on its twigs, lacks hairs on leaf undersides, and its stamens do not extend past the petals. Border privet (*Ligustrum obtusifolium*) is seriously invasive in Southwest and Northern Virginia and is likely underreported in the Blue Ridge. Its semi-evergreen leaves are blunt and measure 1 to 2 inches long; twigs are hairy; flowers fragrant. It spells trouble in woodlands.



Left: Chinese privet blossoms are showy and fragrant. **Right:** Blue-black berries attract birds and mammals in fall and winter.

Mistaken Identity

No matter which privet species is infesting your land, get rid of it! There are no native plants that resemble privet.

Control

Search for privets near and at a distance from known infestations and hedge plantings. Act swiftly to destroy any new incursions. If you catch an invasion early, you may be able to stop the shrub in its tracks. Well-established thickets resist



A thicket of sprouts occurs at the base of large privet shrubs where it was mowed along a roadside.

control and may take several years to eradicate. While mechanical methods can set back a privet colony, the soil disturbance involved usually opens the door for seeds already in the soil to germinate. A combination of mechanical and herbicide control methods usually works best.

Manual & Mechanical: These methods often require follow up with foliar herbicides or cut-stump herbicides to be effective because *any root pieces left in the ground will sprout.*

Small seedlings can be hand-pulled. Larger shrubs can be dug out with a mattock or pulled out with a Weed Wrench®. However, re-sprouting is likely and makes these methods labor intensive. Another way is to cut down privet thickets with a chainsaw or brush-cutter or mow invaded fields and roadsides. You'll need

to repeat these methods several times during the growing season and for several years to weaken the invasive shrubs; this is time consuming and only slowly effective. Extensive infestations of mature tall privet in open areas may call for a forest mulcher, which can grind huge plants to ground level quickly and efficiently.

Grazing: Goats may be used to control privet, if they are grazed heavily in spring and early summer. They must be grazed for several years to kill the shrubs, but be aware that goats usually eat anything else that attracts them.

Burning: Prescribed burning kills privet stems, but not the roots; these resprout vigorously. Use fire to reduce the mass of privet stems and foliage in fields, then foliar-spray new growth.

Cut Stump: This is an effective way to control privet. Cut or saw stems with loppers, a handsaw or a chainsaw, near ground level; immediately apply a concentrated, recommended herbicide to the cut stump. Monitor treated stumps for resprouts; cut stump any new growth, or use a foliar spray on the new leaves.

Foliar Spray: Chinese privet may be effectively controlled with foliar sprays if you pay careful attention to application timing and herbicide concentration. *The recommended herbicide is of a concentration higher than is needed to control most invasive plants.* Because nearby desirable plants may be injured by spray drift when large shrubs are treated, cut or saw privets taller than 4 feet to a manageable size. Then spray the regrowth. This method also reduces the amount of herbicide needed. You will avoid damaging nearby plants if you spray privet, which is evergreen, in late fall or early winter when deciduous plants have dropped their leaves. Apply the herbicide on a mild day from November through January when it is above freezing.

Basal Bark: Extensive colonies of tall privets can be controlled with basal bark applications if stems are smaller than 6 inches in diameter. This is less labor intensive than cut stump-ing. Some pruning and cutting back of lower branches may be necessary beforehand, however, to allow access. Paint or spray the entire circumferences of the lower 12 inches of each stem with a concentrated, recommended herbicide mixed with vegetable or mineral oil along with a penetrant. Monitor for resprouts and treat as needed. Basal bark treatments can take a few months to kill privet, but are very effective.



Privet seedlings have two-ranked leaves in a flat plane.

No single treatment eradicates privet. Almost always new seedlings and reprints emerge the year after intensive control measures are undertaken. Have patience and keep at it!

For currently approved herbicide recommendations, check the Virginia Department of Forestry chart *Non-Native Invasive Plant Species Control Treatments*, which you can download from the Blue Ridge PRISM website.