



Chinese Privet: The Invasion

The spring season is in full bloom! I really enjoy this time of year. There is nothing like seeing the beautiful spring colors popping out everywhere you look. I recently took a trip to Murfreesboro on I-40 and noticed in the woodland areas there was nothing blooming more profusely than privet.

Chinese privet is a woody and very invasive shrub that is native to China. The plant was originally brought over to the United States for ornamental purposes but it has escaped cultivation. It is causing many problems in our woodland areas and pastures throughout the state.

This perennial shrub (*Ligustrum spp.*) can grow up to 16 feet in height. The leaves are elliptic to ovate in shape, oppositely arranged on twigs. The flowers have both male and female parts.

Privet is capable of invading natural areas such as floodplains and woodlands. The aggressive nature of privet allows it to form dense thickets that out competes desirable plants. The amount

of seeds produced by privet is another mechanism that allows for its prolonged survival. The seeds are spread by birds and other wildlife.

Privet control methods include mechanical controls such as mowing and cutting, physical control such as seedling removal and burning, and chemical control such as herbicide application. Herbicide control measures include foliar spray which needs to occur in late autumn or early spring with glyphosate or triclopyr. Basal bark applications can be done with glyphosate or triclopyr and the same can be said about cut stump applications. Before considering the use of any herbicides, please be sure to read the herbicide label and follow all directions and precautions.

I have had many battles with privet. It is definitely a tough, invasive plant. If you don't believe how tough it is, ask Andy Williams at Lichterman Nature Center. They have privet pull opportunities every spring. By all means, get it out of your landscape before it takes over. Until next time, happy gardening!



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