**Elaeagnus angustifolia** - Russian Olive (*Elaeagnaceae*)

Russian-olive, oleaster, or narrow-leafed oleaster is grown for its silvery gray foliage. The tree prefers a sunny location and is tolerant of most soil types, but can be affected by various diseases. It has become a problem invasive plant in some areas.

**FEATURES**

**Form**
- a deciduous large shrub or tree, 20' tall x 20' spread
- over 15' tall and wide-spreading
- rounded habit
- fast growth rate (12-18” per year)

**Culture**
- very adaptable to a wide range of environmental conditions; thrives in alkaline soils and sandy flood plains
- able to fix nitrogen so can grow on very poor soils
- tolerates cold, drought, salt sprays
- easily transplanted
- grows most vigorously in full sun
- does not do well in wet sites or under dense shade
- susceptible to foliar and stem diseases, but affected by few pests
- it may invade grasslands and sparse woodlands.
- can be readily pruned and resprouts easily

-propagated primarily by seed

**Foliage**
- leaves alternate, simple, deciduous
- willow-like (oblong to linear-lanceolate), 1.5-3" long x 0.5-1" wide
- entire leaf margin
- dull green above
- and silvery below
- no autumn color

**Flowers**
- small, 0.3-0.6” long, perfect (both male and female parts on the same flower), bell-shaped, but lacking petals (apetalous)
- silvery or whitish silvery on the outside, yellow inside
- fragrant
- appearing in May
- often not noticed as they are covered by the foliage

**Fruits**
- drupe-like, yellow with silvery scales, edible
- 0.5” long
- matures in Sept.

**Twigs**
- young branches thin, silvery
- stems sometimes thorny, covered in scales
- older branches develop a shiny light brown color
- buds are small, silvery-brown and rounded, covered with 4 scales

**Trunk**
- grayish-brown older bark

**USAGE**

**Function**
- used as a hedge or screen, but may be an accent plant in the border or entranceway because of silvery foliage
- may be a foundation shrub
- can be massed along highways or seacoasts

**Texture**
- fine to medium texture

**Assets**
- silvery foliage
- adaptability and growth in poor sites

**Liabilities**
- from a landscape perspective: Canker, Verticillium wilt and leaf spot destroy that silvery silhouette by killing many branches
- thorns may be present
- from an environmental perspective: troublesome invasive that creates heavy shade and suppresses plants that require direct sunlight in areas such as fields, prairies, open woodlands and forest edges.
- Russian olive can displace native plants such as Cottonwoods and Willows in riparian woodlands. It can become a monoculture covering many acres.

**Habitat**
- Zones 2 to 7
- Native to Southern Europe and Western and Central Asia

**SELECTIONS**

**Alternates**
- shrubs with silvery foliage or with wide adaptability to sunny locations (various Willows). However, the plant should be used only in very specific circumstances.

**Cultivars - Variants - Related species**
- The species is the main form of the plant that is available in the trade.

*Elaeagnus*: a Greek name originally applied to a willow, from *helodes*, growing in marshes, and *hagnos*, pure, referring to the white fruit masses of the willow; *angustifolia*: narrow leaved

Russian-olive is a native of Southern Europe and Western Asia. It was introduced into the U.S. in the early 1900’s. By the mid-1900’s it had escaped cultivation and is now extensively naturalized primarily in western states. It grows in some eastern states but is not naturalized.