

Euonymus alatus - Burning Bush or Winged Euonymus

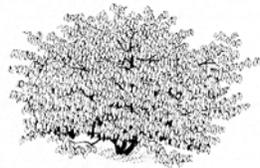
(Celastraceae)

Euonymus alatus is a tough but overutilized landscape shrub primarily found in mass plantings or as a formal hedge. Burning Bush is widely known for its brilliant red autumn display, and lesser known for the bold-textured corky stems that have winter appeal on the underutilized species form.

FEATURES

Form

-large-sized foliage shrub



-species form very slowly maturing at 15' tall x 15' wide

-cultivars are smaller (10' x 10', or less, making them medium-sized shrubs), and often are kept to an even smaller

size by shearing, irrespective of their specific genetic potential for size

-upright vased growth habit in youth, becoming spreading rounded and horizontally layered with age (if not pruned)

-slow growth rate

Culture

-full sun to full shade

-very adaptable to poor soils, compacted soils, various soil pHs, heat, drought, periodic shearing, and pollution (and is therefore very urban tolerant), and is also quite adaptable to partial to full shade (where growth is less vigorous and autumn color is a mixture of pink-red and faded yellow)

-several significant problems may affect this species (coral spot, nectria canker, euonymus scale)

Foliage

-medium to dark green, 1-3" long, with a short petiole

-opposite to subopposite, elliptical to obovate, with finely serrated margins

-autumn color is a brilliant red in sunny sites or a faded pink-red in shady sites

Flowers

-yellow-green miniature

inflorescences in late May and early June, usually inconspicuous

Fruits

-many individual plants and/or cultivars have sparse fruits, if present at all

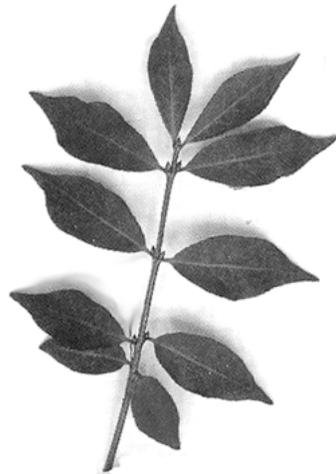
Twigs

-for the species form, very narrow dark green strips occur along the axis of the thick stem, surrounded by very prominent tan to brown corky wings

-the common cultivar 'Compacta', however, has relatively thin stems that are primarily green, and the corkiness is replaced by thin tan strips interrupting the subtle green color

Trunk

-brown and slightly fissured, usually multi-trunked



and branching very low to the ground

-with advanced maturity, some shrubs (especially the species form) can be limbed up into multi-trunked tree form, or truly "specimen" shrub form

USAGE

Function

-formal or informal hedge, group or mass planting, non-thorny barrier, deciduous screen, specimen, border, entranceway, foundation, or at water's edge (outstanding red color reflection in autumn, but not wet site tolerant)

Texture

-medium texture in foliage, and medium (non-corky stemmed) to bold (corky stemmed) texture when bare

-thick density in foliage and when bare

Assets

-brilliant flaming-red autumn color

-takes well to pruning and shearing

-urban stress tolerant

-vased shape in youth and layered horizontal branching at maturity (if unpruned)

-ornamental winged stems (on the species form and some little-known cultivars)

Liabilities

-whether pruned or unpruned, it often slowly grows beyond its intended boundaries or presumed mature height

-several biotic and abiotic stresses can be significant for this species, compounded by its being overutilized in the landscape

-may slowly sucker from its base or roots with age, forming tight colonies at maturity if these are not regularly nipped off

-some plants may become leggy with age

Habitat

-Zones 4 to 8

-Native to Northeastern Asia and Central China

SELECTIONS

Alternates

-shrubs with good autumn color (*Aronia arbutifolia* 'Brilliantissima', *Fothergilla gardenii*, *Hamamelis x intermedia*, *Viburnum rufidulum*, *Viburnum setigerum*, etc.)

-shrubs that may serve as formal or informal hedges (*Ligustrum obtusifolium*, *Ribes alpinum*, *Taxus x media*, *Thuja occidentalis* 'Emerald' ('Smaragd'), *Viburnum dentatum*, *Viburnum lantana*, etc.)

Cultivars - Variants- Related species

-all cultivars of Burning Bush are more compact than the species form, but they differ primarily in how compact they are, how corky or non-corky the stems are, cold hardiness, upright vs. rounded shape, and whether they branch to the ground vs. become leggy with age

-*E. alatus* 'Compactus' - a "compact" form maturing slowly at 8' x 8', with virtually no corky wings on its first-year, relatively thin, but more dense green stems, but only hardy to zone 5; the most popular cultivar by far and abundantly available

-*E. alatus* 'Nordine Strain' - heavily cork-barked, branching to the ground, to 10' x 10', hardy to zone 4; low availability

-*E. alatus* 'Rudy Haag' - similar in appearance but much smaller than 'Compacta', slowly growing to 5' x 5', hardy to zone 4; rare availability