Ligustrum obtusifolium - Border Privet (Oleaceae)

*Ligustrum obtusifolium* is the most common formal semi-evergreen to deciduous hedge for northern climates through zone 3. Border Privet has dense, dark green foliage to the ground if pruned as a formal hedge.

**FEATURES**

**Form**
- semi-evergreen to deciduous large shrub
  - to 12' tall x 15' wide but often smaller
- radiating rounded shrub in youth if left unpruned, becoming an arching vase with age
- frequently pruned into a formal hedge
- medium rate

**Culture**
- full sun to partial shade
- adaptable to most urban stress situations (soils, pHs, compaction, drought, high light, heavy pruning, pollution)
- does not like poor drainage

**Foliage**
- medium to dark green
- semi-evergreen to deciduous
- opposite
- elliptical to oblong
- short petioled
- about 1-1.5" long
- green, yellowish green, or green-purple
- not showy

**Flowers**
- white
- late May to early June
- inflorescences that tend to nod
- will cover the plant and be rather attractive if it was unpruned during the second half of the previous year and sited in full sun
- slightly malodorous
- attract bees

**Fruits**
- black to blue-black
- fruits mature in clusters in Sept. and persist into the following spring if uneaten by birds

**Twigs**
- olive, becoming light gray
- thin and multi-branching, giving the unpruned or pruned shrub a very twiggy appearance
- will branch and foliage nearly to the ground

**Trunk**
- light gray and fairly smooth
- lenticels a lighter color

**USAGE**

**Function**
- formal hedge by far the most common
- also informal hedge, screen, or non-thorny barrier
- good in rows, borders, against walls or foundations (except full shade areas)

**Texture**
- fine in foliage and when bare
- average density in foliage but thick when bare

**Assets**
- urban tolerance
- most commonly used deciduous formal hedge for northern climates
- foliage to the ground if a formal hedge

**Liabilities**
- growth rate requires frequent pruning if used as a formal hedge
- poor autumn color
- other shrubs and trees may grow up through the shrub and be a pesky problem to remove because the average density allows light to penetrate to the interior
- garbage collector
- attracts bees if allowed to flower

**Habitat**
- Zone 3
- Native to Japan

**SELECTIONS**

**Alternates**
- formal or informal hedges, either deciduous (*Ligustrum sp.*, *Ribes alpinum*, *Spiraea x vanhouttei*, *Viburnum dentatum*, etc.) or evergreen (*Buxus* cultivars, *Taxus x media*, etc.)
- barriers or screens, either deciduous (*Acanthopanax sieboldianus*, *Ligustrum sp.*, *Lonicera sp.*, *Rosa multiflora*, *Rubus sp.*, etc.) or evergreen (*Juniperus* [upright forms], *Taxus x media* 'Hicksii', *Thuja occidentalis* [upright forms], etc.)

**Cultivars - Variants - Related species**

- *Ligustrum obtusifolium var. regelianum* - Regel Privet - (named for a person, but often incorrectly spelled Regal Privet); to 5' x 5'; horizontal branching predominates with the leaves (to 2") in a single plane with the branch, yielding an overall graceful layered appearance if left unpruned; commonly used as the variety of choice for more compact urban needs
- *Ligustrum x vicaryi* - Golden Vicary Privet - a hybrid that yields bright yellow-green foliage in full sun, but dies back to the ground about every third winter in central Ohio; needs full sun for best golden color (good for foundations and entranceways), but exposure makes it very prone to winter stem dieback