

Blunt-Leaved Privet

Ligustrum obtusifolium



[Further
Information
and
References](#)

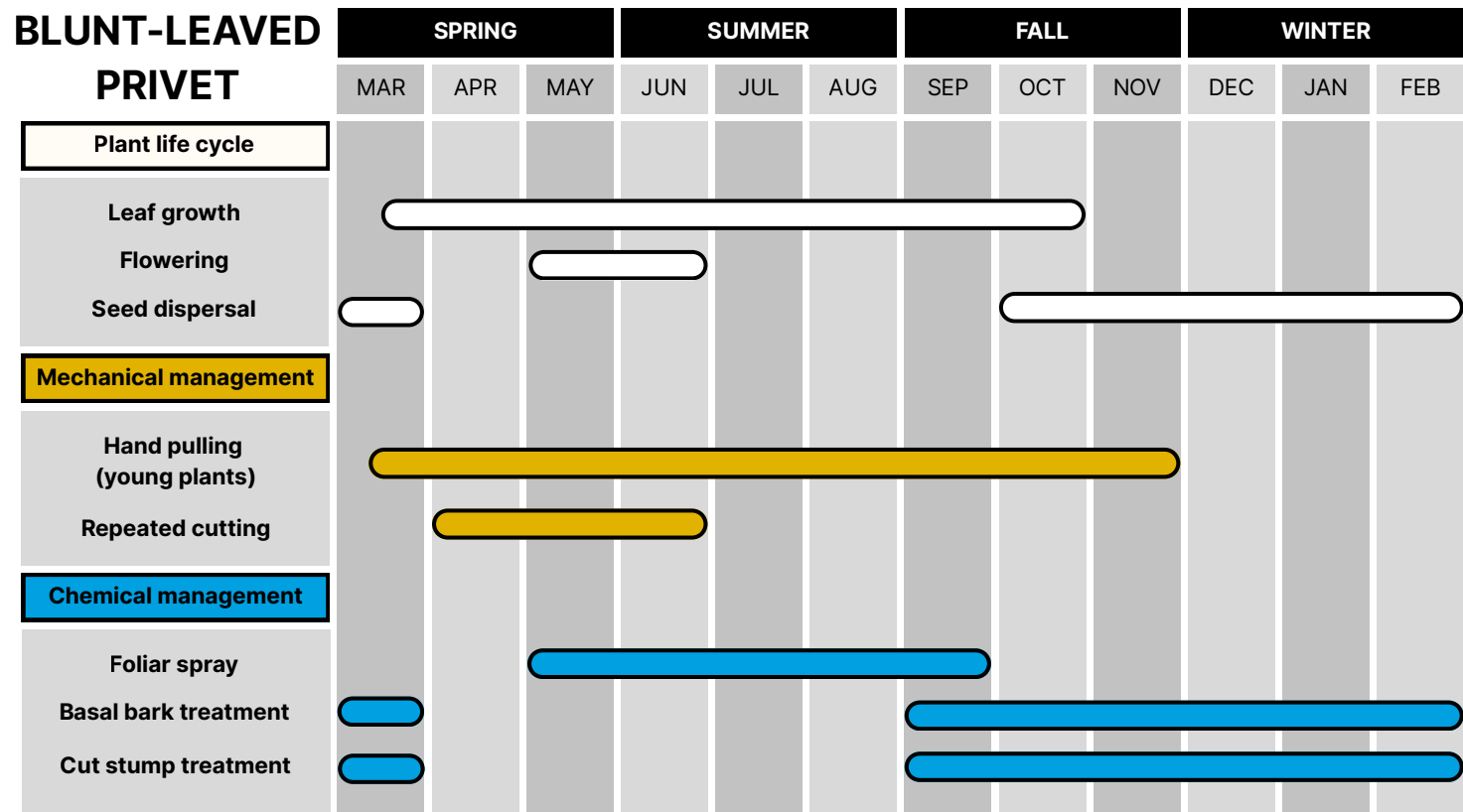


Quick Facts: Blunt-Leaved Privet (*Ligustrum obtusifolium*) is an invasive ornamental deciduous to semi-evergreen shrub. It was introduced to the United States as a landscaping plant, and is one of several Privet species (genus *Ligustrum*) that have escaped cultivation. It is illegal to buy or sell in Indiana, and other Privets are more widely banned in the Midwest. Some Privets are toxic to livestock, including cows. Blunt-Leaved Privet outcompetes native plants by shading them out. It can reduce timberland productivity and general biodiversity. Privet roots can send up multiple sprouts, forming dense thickets that crowd out native species. It can grow in both full sun and shade, making it adaptable to many environments like roadsides, fields, floodplains, and forests. In the Midwest, it is particularly common in riparian forests and woodlands.

Invasion strategy: Blunt-Leaved Privet produces an abundance of fruits that, despite lacking proper nutrition, are eaten and spread by birds. Ornamental plants in home gardens can act as a source population to spread it throughout the local area. Root fragments are capable of resprouting, and can form new plants if transported to a suitable location.

Identifying Features: Blunt-Leaved Privet is a large, multi-stemmed shrub that grows up to 12 feet in height. It has an upright growth habit with many stems spreading equally in all directions.

- Leaves are opposite one another on the stem, oblong, and 1-2 inches long, with smooth margins and rounded, blunt ends.
- Leaves are somewhat thickened, darker green above and lighter green underneath.
- Bark is smooth and gray-brown with visible lenticels (lighter, horizontally elongated dots).
- Young twigs can appear slightly fuzzy or hairy.
- Stems occasionally produce short, sharp offshoots called "spurs".
- Flowers occur in groups at or near the end of branches.
- Flowers are small, white, and fragrant. Each flower consists of a long tube that splits into four petals. The length of the tube exceeds the length of the petals.
- Flowers develop into numerous small, oblong fruits, each ¼ inch or less in diameter.
- Immature fruits are green, maturing into a shiny blue-black color with a white waxy coating.
- Ripe fruits can be retained on the plant through winter and into spring.



This chart is based on USDA plant hardiness zone 6. Plant growth and treatment times vary by region.

Management methods:

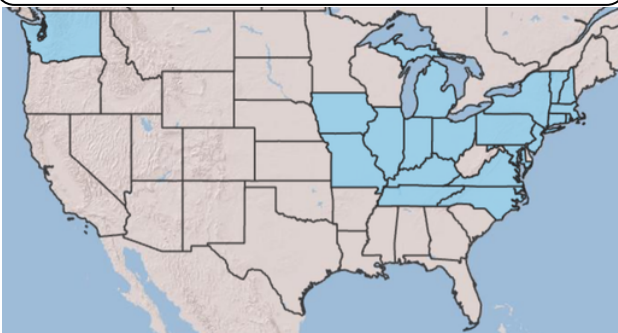
Mechanical - Hand pulling can be effective for young plants; ensure that all root fragments are removed, as they can resprout. Repeated cut backs is another option, but it often takes multiple years to complete. It is most effective in late spring and early summer, when root reserves are depleted.

Chemical - Foliar sprays can be used for plants short enough to reach with spray equipment. Larger, multi-stemmed plants can be treated with basal bark applications of herbicide with carrier oils. Cut stump treatments are also possible, but can be difficult to achieve for plants with many stems. Basal bark and cut stump treatments work best in fall/winter.

Disclaimer - Selecting the best management method for this plant can be site and context specific. Check with your local USDA Service Center or University Extension agent to explore your options and determine what is most appropriate for your location and situation.

Management information: Bag and dispose of plant materials, including fruits/seeds and root fragments, where they cannot grow or resprout.

Personal protective equipment is recommended when removing any invasive species, and especially when using herbicides. Always follow label instructions when using herbicide.



Species present

Absent

Midwest Invasive Plant Fact Sheet #7 – References and Supplemental Information

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Look-Alike Species:

- Chinese Privet, *L. sinense* (supplemental photo 1); Common Privet, *Ligustrum vulgare* (supplemental photo 2); Japanese Privet, *L. japonicum*
- These other non-native Privets are very difficult to tell apart, but all are invasive and can be managed like Blunt-Leaved Privet.



Look-Alike Species:

- Dogwood (*Cornus* spp.) (supplemental photo 3) and Viburnum (*Viburnum* spp.) (supplemental photo 4).
- Both of these native plants have simple, opposite leaves, like Blunt-Leaved Privet. They can be distinguished by their flowers and textured bark on their lower stems.



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References and Additional Reading:

- Indiana Department of Natural Resources. [Terrestrial Plant Rule](#). [State law prohibiting sale].
- Indiana Plant Species Assessment Working Group. [Invasive Plant Fact Sheet: Blunt-leaved Privet](#). [Identification, mechanical, and chemical management information].
- Kerr & Welch. 1999. [Fatal privet \(*Ligustrum amurese*\) toxicosis in Tennessee cows](#). Vet Hum Toxicol. [Toxicity information].
- Penn State Extension. [Privet](#). [Native lookalikes, chemical management information].
- Penn State Extension. [Privet: Accurate Identification](#). [Identification information].
- State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management. 2024. [Suggested Chemical Treatment for Non-Native Invasive Species](#). [Chemical control Information].
- The Ohio State University. [Controlling Non-native invasive plants in Ohio Forests: Privets \(*Ligustrum spp.*\)](#). [Identification, mechanical, and chemical control information].
- Ulyshen et al. 2022. [Decadal patterns of forest and pollinator recovery following the eradication of an invasive shrub](#). Front Eco Evo. [Environmental impact information].
- Woody Invasives of the Great Lakes Collaborative. 2025. [Border privet](#). [Identification information].

Photo Credits: Photo 1: The Ohio State University, Dave Apsley; Photo 2: Illinois Wildflowers; Photo 3: iNaturalist, Craig Martin; Photo 4: iNaturalist, Sandy Wolkenberg; Range map: USDA PLANTS Database; Supplemental photo 1: iNaturalist, pileatedtree (username); Supplemental photo 2: iNaturalist, Thomas Bütikofer; Supplemental photo 3: iNaturalist, Jody Allair; Supplemental photo 4: iNaturalist, Meg Sebasky.

Resources:

- Find your local [University Extension Program](#)
- Find your local [USDA NRCS Service Center](#)
- Find your local [Soil and Water Conservation District](#)
- Check out [Management and Control of Woody Invasive Species](#)
- Check out [Purdue University Extension's Woody Encroachment and Woody Invasives fact sheet](#)
- Check out other [invasive plant fact sheets](#)

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