



Invasive Plant Alert¹

Orange eye butterflybush *Buddleja davidii* Franch.

Orange eye butterflybush has been used in ornamental gardens for more than one hundred years. Escapes from cultivated beds are quick to establish themselves either from seed or stem fragments and can quickly develop into thickets which crowd out native vegetation.



Figure 1 Plant. John Ruter, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

Where to Look

Orange eye butterflybush is found in a variety of habitats; USDA zones 5-10 and is hardy to -20F. It prefers moist, well-drained soil with partial to full-sun exposures, however, once established it is fairly drought-tolerant. Native to China, it has been naturalized in a wide range of habitats in the United States. It has been found escaping along roadsides, river banks, dryland meadows, dunes, coastal forest edges, and disturbed areas.



Figure 2 Leaves. Dr. Mark Brand, UCONN

Identifying the Plant

Orange eye butterflybush is a sprawling deciduous/semi-evergreen shrub. It can grow anywhere from 3 to 16 feet tall and 4 to 15 feet wide. The leaves are long and oval with tapered points and are slightly toothed. The underside of the leaves is silvery grey and covered with fine hairs.



Figure 3 Flowers. Forest & Kim Starr, Starr Environmental, Bugwood.org

The stems are green when young, but develop peeling gray-brown bark when older.

The flowers are small and tubular with four petals arranged in tapered clusters, drooping slightly from the ends of the branches. The color is highly variable: white, pink, red, purple, yellow and orange and the blooms are seen from the late spring up to the first frost.

The fruit is an ovoid pod containing a number of seeds which ripens Sept-Oct.

How to get rid of it?

Seedlings and plants can be dug out or removed by hand although this disturbance can lead to more seedlings. Glyphosate or triclopyr applied as a cut-stump treatment. Cut branches must be disposed of by composting or burning to ensure they do not sprout. Infested areas can be fenced and browsed by goats for 3-4 years as alternative method of control.



Figure 4. Fruit. Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft., Bugwood.org

Resources

Young-Mathews, A. 2011. Plant fact sheet for orange eye butterflybush (*Buddleja davidii*). USDA-NRCS, Corvallis Plant Materials Center, Corvallis, OR. http://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs_buda2.pdf

New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team. "Orange eye butterflybush". <http://www.njisst.org>

¹ This species has been identified as a potential or emerging threat to natural areas in the mid-Atlantic region