



# Invasive Plant Alert<sup>1</sup>

## Five-leaf Aralia

*Eleutherococcus sieboldianus* (Makino) Koidz.

Five-leaf Aralia is a rapidly growing deciduous shrub which can quickly displace native plants. While uncommon in natural plant communities, when present, it hinders the growth of native trees and shrubs.



Figure 1 Flowers. Dr. Mark Brand, UCONN.

## Where to Look

Five-leaf aralia tolerates a wide range of conditions, including unfavorable conditions such as alkaline, heavy, sandy, or dry soils. It also tolerates severe pruning, heavy shade, and air pollution. This plant is most likely found in open forests and forest edges.

Native to China and Japan, five-leaf aralia was first introduced as an ornamental plant. Commercially available in North America, five-leaf aralia is often used in urban sites, where conditions do not allow other plants to grow.

Occurrence of five-leaf aralia in natural plant communities is extremely rare. When allowed to grow unchecked, this shrub will

smoother all other vegetation in its path.

## Identifying the Plant

Five-leaf Aralia is an upright, fast growing, deciduous shrub with arching branches. It reaches a maximum height and width of 6-8 feet. Short spines are found at each leaf bud along the stems. Five-leaf Aralia has alternate, toothed leaves. Its leaves are compound and palmate; each leaf contains five to seven leaflets. Coloration varies but leaves are usually a rich, dark green. Some plants come in a variegated form, with leaves edged in white. Leaves remain on the plant into late fall; no fall coloration occurs.



Figure 2 Palmate compound leaves with 5-7 leaflets. Dr. Mark Brand, UCONN.

Flowers bloom May through June and occur in clusters. They are small and a greenish white color. Likewise, five-leaf Aralia fruits in clusters, producing small lack berries; each berry contains 2 to 5 seeds.

## How to get rid of it?

Because five-leaf aralia is commercially available and commonly used in landscaping, the best management strategy

available is to control existing populations and prevent its spread into natural ecosystems. Any instance of five leaf aralia in a natural plant setting should be immediately eradicated. This is a very fast growing plant that, once established, is very difficult to remove. Sharp spines at leaf nodes make handling five-leaf aralia very difficult.

Additionally, five-leaf aralia can spread quickly. It is capable of forming new roots when branches touch the ground. The roots can then form new stems. Softwood cuttings also root very easily.



Figure 3 Fully grown *E. sieboldianus*. Dr. Mark Brand, UCONN.

## Resources:

Brand, Mark H. University of Connecticut Plant Database 2000. Web. August 2012.  
<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/Plants/a/acasia/acasia1.html>

New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team. Five-leaf Aralia (*Eleutherococcus sieboldianus*)  
[www.njisst.org](http://www.njisst.org)

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