Invasive Plant Alert[1]

Chinese Privet
Ligustrum sinense Lour.

Ligustrum sinense is a highly aggressive exotic shrub, threatening native species throughout the southeast and beyond. The 5-12 ft. semi-evergreen shrub forms dense, colonies, squeezing out native vegetation.

Native to China, the species was introduced in the US as a garden plant in 1852. It is still on the commercial market.

Where to Look
Chinese Privet readily invades abandoned lots, farmlands, and disturbed areas where it forms impenetrable thickets. It thrives in wet to dry habitats and is found in low woods, stream sides and can invade forests.

Chinese privet is found in the southeastern US, west to Texas, Oklahoma and Missouri, and as far north as Massachusetts. It is found throughout Virginia, where it is classified as invasive.

Identifying the Plant
A member of the olive family, Chinese Privet is a shrub that grows from 5-15 ft. tall. Leaves are elliptical with smooth edges, and are arranged oppositely along the twigs. The 1.5 to 2 in. leaves are thick with a glossy upper surface and a pale green lower surface. The midrib of each leaf is hairy.
Blooming in June and July, small, white, four-petaled flowers grow in clusters at the ends of branches. The blooms are have a strong fragrance appealing to some, noxious to others. Small blue-black fruits, less than a ¼ in. in diameter, and containing a hard seed, develop from each flower. The many branched shrub has a smooth, light tan to gray bark.

Figure 1 *L. sinense* in flower. James H. Miller & Ted Bodner, Southern Weed Science Society, Bugwood.org

How to get rid of it?
L. sinense spreads primarily through distribution of its plentiful seeds by birds. This, coupled with the plant's ability to easily re-sprout after being cut, makes control difficult and requires repeated treatments.

Figure 2 Fruits. James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Controlling plants by hand is effective only for plants with stems one inch or less in diameter. The entire root must be removed.

Mechanical methods will result in increased growth due to re-sprouting from suckers.
To be most effective, mechanical control can be used in conjunction with chemical control using glyphosate herbicides in appropriate concentrations. The herbicide can be applied to stumps immediately after cutting. A foliar application is recommended in late summer.

For large masses, controlled burning can facilitate foliar application by reducing total mass, but due to vigorous re-sprouting, burning alone may even increase the number of new plants.

Figure 3 *L. sinense* infestation. Chris Evans, Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, Bugwood.org

Resources
Invasive Alien Plant Species of Virginia.
(1997) http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/documents/fslisi.pdf

USDA NRCS Plant Guide Chinese Privet.
(2003) http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_lisi.pdf

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

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