



Invasive Plant Alert¹

Holly Osmanthus

Osmanthus heterophyllus (G. Don)
P.S. Green

Holly Osmanthus is a large evergreen shrub growing 8 to 15 feet tall and 8 to 10 feet wide. It is hardy to zone 6 and is in flower from September to October. The flowers are extremely fragrant. Osmanthus is not self-fertile. The flowers are dioecious, individual flowers are either male or female, but only one sex is to be found on any one plant so both male and female plants must be grown for viable seed production.



Figure 1. *Osmanthus heterophyllus*.
Will Cook. Duke University.

Where to Look

Holly Osmanthus is native to central and southern Japan and Taiwan. It was brought to North America as a landscape plant and is often used as a hedge, border, screening or barrier plant.

Holly Osmanthus has been found naturalizing in Rock Creek Park and as a rare escape from cultivation in North Carolina. It adapts to a range of growing

conditions, although preferring fertile, acidic, moist well drained soils, Holly Osmanthus will grow in light (sandy), medium (loamy) and heavy (clay) soils and will tolerate neutral and basic (alkaline) soils. It can grow in semi-shade (light woodland) or no shade. The plant tolerates strong winds but not maritime exposure.



Figure 1 Flowers. Kenpei Wikimedia Commons

Identifying the Plant

Holly Osmanthus is a large evergreen shrub. Foliage is opposite, ovate to elliptic-oblong, spinose, 1 - 2 1/2" long, leathery, lustrous dark green above, yellow-green beneath with reticulate venation. Bark is light brown with small, raised lenticels. Flowers are white, 1/4" wide, in clusters of 4-5, strongly fragrant, blooming in the fall. Osmanthus is dioecious and non-self-pollinating; fruits are 3/8 to 1/2" long blue-black drupes, rare in cultivation. This plant is easy to confuse with true holly (*Ilex* spp.) but Osmanthus have opposite leaves and holly have alternate leaves.

How to get rid of it?

Management of Holly Osmanthus is not documented. However, mechanical control of seedlings and young plants by pulling is likely effective. Mature plants will need to have the stumps grubbed out or treated with chemical herbicides, as Osmanthus will readily send up new shoots from the remaining stump.



Figure 2 *Osmanthus heterophyllus*.
Kurt Stuber. Wikimedia Commons

Resources

University of Delaware Botanic Gardens
http://ag.udel.edu/udbg/broadleaf_evergreen/o_heterophyllus.html

Plants for a Future

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Osmanthus+heterophyllus>

Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines of North Carolina, compiled by Will Cook

<http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook/trees/oshe.html>

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