



Invasive Species Leaflet



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Ligustrum sinense (Chinese Privet)

Initial Introduction and Expansion in Range

Ligustrum sinense was introduced to the United States from China as a garden plant in 1952. It has been widely planted for hedges and has since escaped cultivation spreading



throughout the Southeast and Midwest. *Ligustrum sinense* is now found in all 3 physiographic regions of North Carolina. This shrub prefers moist soil conditions but is also found on upland sites usually at elevations less than 3,000 feet.

A single mature *L. sinense* shrub can produce hundreds of fruits that are a favorite food for a number of bird species. Although *L. sinense* can spread by suckers, birds are by far the primary dispersal mechanism of this plant.

Description and Biology

- Large evergreen shrub up to 15 feet tall.
- Small (usually 1 to 1.5 inches long) elliptic, smooth-edged leaves arranged oppositely along the twigs. Leaves are thick with a glossy upper surface and a pale green lower surface. Midrib of each leaf is hairy.
- Smooth light tan to gray bark.
- Small white flowers arranged in branching clusters at the ends of branches bloom in June and July.
- Small black fruits ripen in August and September.
- Resembles *Ligustrum japonicum* (Japanese privet) which has larger, glossier leaves.



Habitats Susceptible to Invasion

Ligustrum sinense is usually found in bottomlands, low woods, stream sides and disturbed areas. Roadsides and fence-rows are avenues contributing to the expansion in range of this plant. *Ligustrum sinense* is an extremely aggressive shrub forming dense, impenetrable thickets that can shade out the herbaceous layer altering the natural species composition and community structure of natural areas.

Prevention and Control

If an infestation of *L. sinense* is caught early, the possibility of successful control and eradication is good. Well-established thickets of *L. sinense* can be controlled but complete eradication is difficult.

Young seedlings (no more than 0.5 inch in diameter) of *L. sinense* can be effectively controlled by hand-pulling. Stems up to 2 inches in diameter can be manually removed by tools designed for this purpose, such as a Weed Wrench. Larger plants can be killed by spraying the foliage with a 2 percent solution of glyphosate or triclopyr and a 0.5 percent nonionic surfactant. Ideally, the plants should be sprayed in the late fall or early spring when temperatures are above 65 degrees Fahrenheit and many native species are dormant. As long as the ground is not frozen, this shrub can also be killed by cutting it down within 6 inches of the ground and immediately spraying the freshly cut stump with a 50 percent solution of triclopyr. All treatments should be followed up the next year to monitor and control basal sprouts and root suckers.

THE LABEL IS THE LAW!
WHEN USING ANY PESTICIDE, FOLLOW ALL LABEL INSTRUCTIONS

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Ligustrum sinense photography by Troy Evans, Bugwood.org (*top*) and Chuck Bargeron, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org (*bottom*).

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