

United States Department of Agriculture

Soil Conservation Service

Program Aid Number 1392

# 'Redwing' autumn olive



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'Redwing' autumn olive, *Elaeagnus umbellata*, Thunb., is a dense woody shrub. It is ideal for screen or border plantings and may also be used in farmstead wind-breaks or shelterbelts. It is highly valued as food and cover for wildlife, especially songbirds. Redwing was jointly released in April 1985 by the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service; the Agricultural Research Division of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln; and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

### Description

Autumn olive was introduced into this country from Manchuria around 1830. It is a multistemmed, round shrub that grows to a height and width of **10 to 15** feet. The branches are yellowish brown and often silver tinged. The oval leaves are 2 to 3 inches long and have wavy edges and silvery undersides.

The blossoms, which appear in mid-May to early June, are pale yellow. The berries are red with green speckles when they mature in early September, as much as **20** days earlier than other varieties of autumn olive. Compared to other varieties, Redwing is more winter hardy, has larger and darker leaves, and has sweeter and larger fruit.

### Establishment

Following routine planting procedures for trees and shrubs with bare roots, seedlings can be successfully established by transplanting stock during April and May. Weed and rodent control is necessary for good establishment and uniform growth. Control can be accomplished through cultivation and mowing. Spacing

for hedgerow plantings is 4 to 6 feet with 8 to 10 feet between rows. In clump plantings, the maximum spacing is 8 to 10 feet.

The Soil Conservation Service maintains breeder seed and foundation stock at its Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, 7472 Stoll Road, East Lansing, Michigan 48823.

No serious disease or insect damage has been observed to limit Redwing's growth. Girdling by mice during winter can cause serious damage to all varieties of autumn olive. Browse damage by deer is also evident in some plantings.

### Propagation

Redwing is an open-pollinated, seed-propagated plant. Each mature plant produces about 30 pounds of berries annually. The berries should be harvested as soon as they ripen in early September. The pulp should be removed immediately to prevent spoilage. Ten pounds of berries will yield about 1 pound of clean seed, or about **22,000** seeds. Seedlings are easily grown by sowing the untreated seed in the fall.

### Adaptation

Redwing autumn olive is adapted to most of the Northeast and the lower Great Lakes region. The area of adaptation extends south to Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri, and west through most of Nebraska (see the adaptation map). Redwing is also adapted to the Willamette Valley area of Oregon. It grows best on coarse-textured, well-drained soils. Poor plant survival and growth rates have been recorded for plantings made on poorly drained, fine-textured soils.

Cover: Closeup of 'Redwing' autumn olive with fruit.

## Availability

For more information on where to obtain Redwing autumn olive and how to use and plant it, contact the local office of the Soil Conservation Service. It is listed in the telephone directory under U.S. Government, Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service. Assistance is available without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

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■ Area of adaptation of  
'Redwing' autumn olive.

