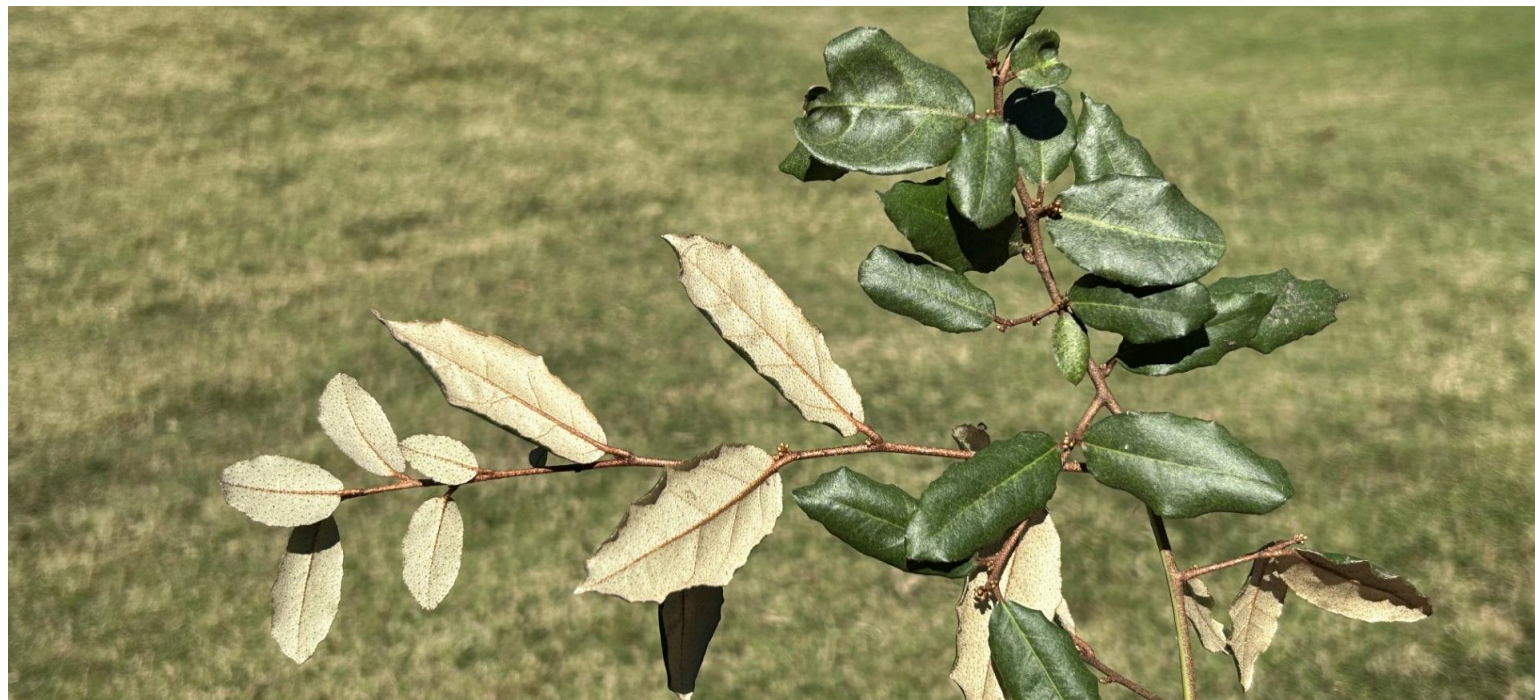


October Invasive of the Month

Elaeagnus Species



Autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) & Thorny olive (*Elaeagnus pungens*)

Like many other persistent invasive species, autumn olive and thorny olive were brought to the US from China and Japan in the 1800s for ornamental and horticultural uses. It was historically planted to provide food and habitat to wildlife, control erosion, and reclaim disturbed areas. Since then, escaped populations of these species have spread rapidly and taken over natural areas. Their nitrogen fixing roots allow them to live in areas with poor soil quality and thrive in disturbed areas such as roadsides, field edges, and eroded slopes. Elaeagnus species can quickly shade-out native species and cause reduced biodiversity.

Identification: Both of these Elaeagnus shrub species are characterized by their silver-scaled leaf undersides and alternate oval shaped leaves. While autumn olive is a deciduous shrub that can reach heights of 20 feet, thorny olive is a relatively smaller evergreen shrub reaching heights of 15 feet. Thorny olives have thorns and more narrow leaves compared to autumn olive. Autumn olive flowers in the spring and fruits ripen in early fall. Thorny olive flowers in fall and fruits ripen in late winter to early spring.

Fun fact: Autumn olives are prolific seed producers, a single plant can produce 200,000 seeds in one year!

Invasive Species Program

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