



Elaeagnus angustifolia Russian-Olive¹

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INTRODUCTION

Russian-Olive grows in an open, somewhat irregular globe shape 15 to 20 feet tall and wide (occasionally larger) and has silvery gray-colored foliage (Fig. 1). It has a rapid growth rate when young becoming moderate with age. Shaping and training the leader and major branches is needed to develop a well-formed tree.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Elaeagnus angustifolia*

Pronunciation: eel-ee-AG-nus

an-gus-tih-FOLE-ee-uh

Common name(s): Russian-Olive, Oleaster

Family: *Elaeagnaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 3 through 8 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: hedge; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; reclamation plant; screen; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 20 feet

Spread: 15 to 20 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: oval; spreading

Crown density: open



Figure 1. Middle-aged Russian-Olive.

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: lanceolate; oblong

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches

Leaf color: silver

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval; round

Fruit length: < .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: yellow

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; suited for human consumption; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; thorns are present on the trunk or branches

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: gray

Current year twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerance: good

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: No entries found.

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

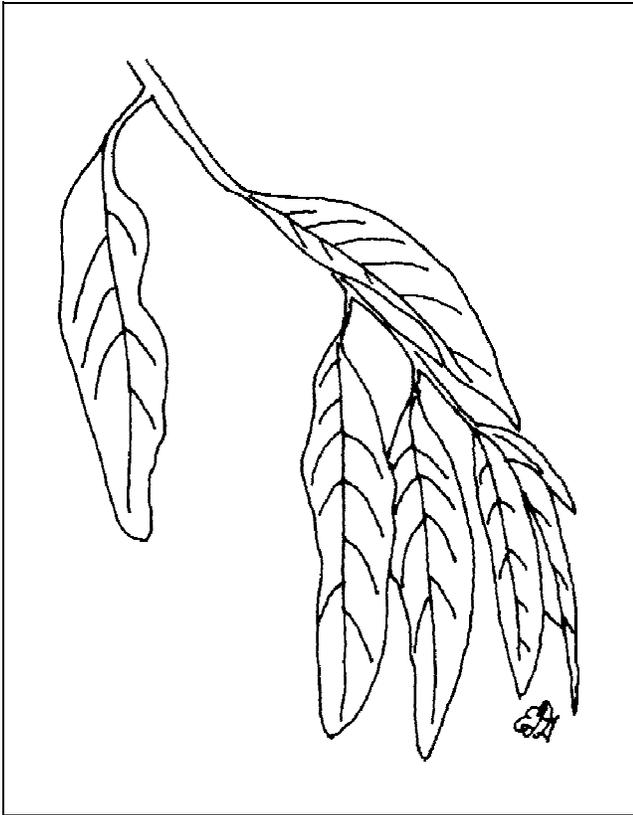


Figure 3. Foliage of Russian-Olive.

Pests

Few insects bother elaeagnus. The most likely insect problem may be an infestation by one of the scale insects. Use horticultural oil for some control.

Diseases

Several fungi cause leaf spots on Russian-Olive but are not serious enough to warrant chemical control.

Several canker diseases attack the branches and trunk, particularly in the humid east. The leaves on infected branches turn brown and persist on the tree. Usually, only the branch tip is affected.

Elaeagnus is often killed by verticillium wilt in the east in wet areas or poorly drained sites. The disease causes wilting and browning of leaves on affected branches. Fertilize infected trees and prune out dead branches. The disease is usually fatal and has affected many plantings in the mid-west.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

This thorny tree transplants well but susceptibility to canker diseases and verticillium wilt make it undesirable for large scale landscape plantings, particularly in the moist, eastern climate. But used as an occasional accent, the tree attracts attention due to the color of the foliage. It is commonly planted in the drier parts of the country and performs well due to drought tolerance and drier soil. It has escaped cultivation on the panhandle of Texas and Oklahoma along stream banks. Plant in the area of the landscape with the best drainage. Although often short-lived, it can add color to the landscape and can be planted due to extreme tolerance to tough sites and poor soils.

This tough tree fixes its own nitrogen and prefers a sunny location and is tolerant of alkaline soil, drought, and coastal conditions including salty soil. It probably is better suited for dry climates than the moist climate typical of the eastern United States. It is well suited to central and western Texas, even in heavy clay, but with good surface drainage.