

Russian-olive



Russian-olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*)

General Description

Small tree, sometimes referred to as a large shrub, introduced from Russia. Tolerates saline/alkaline soils. May invade unmanaged bottomlands and moist pastures. Thorny. Silvery leaf color. Leaves retained very late into fall. The largest tree in North Dakota is 43 feet tall with a canopy spread of 63 feet.

Leaves and Buds

Bud Arrangement - Alternate.

Bud Color - Gray-brown, rounded, oblong, with 4 silvery scales.

Bud Size - 1/8 inch.

Leaf Type and Shape - Simple, oblong-lanceolate to linear.

Leaf Margins - Entire.

Leaf Surface - Scaly.

Leaf Length - 1 to 3 inches.

Leaf Width - 1/4 to 5/8 inch.

Leaf Color - Upper surface scaly, grayish-green; undersurface silvery-scaled.

Flowers and Fruits

Flower Type - Flowers are perfect.

Flower Color - Silvery or whitish outside, yellow inside, fragrant.

Fruit Type - Fruits are drupe-like, 1/4 inch long and pulpy.

Fruit Color - Yellow inside, coated with silvery scales.

Form

Growth Habit - Branches random and spreading, starting at base of the trunk, forming a somewhat rounded tree.

Texture - Medium-fine, summer; medium-coarse, winter.

Crown Height - 15 to 25 feet.

Crown Width - 12 to 25 feet.

Bark Color - Young branches silvery, older branches a glistening bronzy-brown, pith is brown.

Root System - Fibrous root system.

Environmental Requirements

Soils

Soil Texture - Adapted to a wide variety of soils.

Soil pH - 5.5 to 8.0. Tolerates alkaline and saline soils.

Windbreak Suitability Group - 1, 1K, 2, 2K, 3, 4, 4C, 5, 6D, 6G, 8, 9C, 9W, 9L.

Cold Hardiness

USDA Zone 2.

Water

Drought resistant. Does not withstand ponding.

Light

Full sun.

Uses

Conservation/Windbreaks

Small tree for farmstead and field windbreaks. Seed is spread prolifically by birds and may overrun unmanaged areas, especially saline sites.

Wildlife

Excellent for wildlife, over 50 species use it for food and cover.

Agroforestry Products

Wood - Beautiful wood for small woodwork pieces.

Urban/Recreational

Can be used as specimen plant for its color accent, or as an impenetrable border or screen.

Cultivated Varieties

Red King Russian-olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia* 'Red King') - Rusty-red fruits. Not sufficiently winter hardy in North Dakota.

Related Species

Sea-buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*)

Silverberry (*Elaeagnus commutata*)

Silver Buffaloberry (*Shepherdia argentea*)

Pests

Often infected by branch and stem cankers (*Tubercularia* canker).