

Elaeagnus umbellata

Autumn olive, Japanese silverberry, spreading oleaster, umbellata oleaster



Elaeagnus umbellata (autumn olive) is a shade-intolerant pioneer species that is found in the dunes of China, Korea and Japan and in the Himalayas. Swedish botanist Thunberg described *Elaeagnus umbellata* in 1784 and the first plants were introduced in England in 1830. The autumn olive becomes a densely branched, substantial shrub or small tree with decoratively overhanging branches, two to five metres tall and wide.

The autumn olive blooms in April and May with pleasant sweetly scented, cream-coloured flowers which look like cloves. They grow in bundles of up to seven in the leaf axils of short twigs and bumblebees and bees love them. After pollination numerous red berries are produced in September and October. These have a tart sweet taste and are very healthy. The berries need to be ripe however, otherwise they taste bitter. The autumn olive is not self-pollinating. The decorative brown twigs are full of scales and star-patterned hairs and often have thorns. The elegant grey green, oval to oblong, alternate leaves of *Elaeagnus umbellata* are simple and smooth edged.

Because of the salt tolerance, preference for warm, dry and sunny growing spots and great hardiness, *Elaeagnus umbellata* is often planted in Japan and the United States to prevent erosion. The autumn olive grows on any normal soil that is not too wet or too heavy. Established plants are very drought-resistant. *Elaeagnus umbellata* also takes care of its own nitrogen supply since the roots fix nitrogen from the air with the aid of actinomycetes. In the southern United States, the species has the reputation of being invasive because of suckering. In cooler climates the shrub does not display any real tendency to sucker. The shrub has an elegant grey appearance overall but less marked than *Elaeagnus angustifolia*. It is used in public spaces and in food forests but can also provide added value as a shrub and even as a hedge in gardens

TYPES OF PLANTING

Tree types: half-stem trees, fruit trees, solitary shrubs | **Topiary on stem:** multi-stem umbrella

USE

Location: park, central reservation, in containers, roof garden, large garden, small garden, cemetery, traffic areas, industrial zones, ecological zone, windbreak, coastal area | **Pavement:** none, open, sealed | **Planting concepts:** food forest, Eco planting, Prairie planting

CHARACTERISTICS

Crown shape: rounded, vase-shaped | **Crown structure:** semi-open | **Height:** 2 - 5 m | **Width:** 2 - 5 m | **Winter hardiness zone:** 4A - 8B

ASPECTS

Wind: tolerant to wind, tolerant to coastal wind | **Soil:** loess, sabulous clay, sand, loamy soil | **Nutrient level:** low in nutrients | **Soil moisture level:** very dry, dry | **Light requirements:** sun | **pH range:** acidic, neutral | **Host plant/forage plant:** bees, birds, small mammals, humans | **Extreme environments:** tolerant to salt spray, tolerant to dryness, tolerates air pollution, tolerates heat

PLANTKENMERKEN

Flowers: raceme, bell-shaped, discrete, small, strongly scented | **Flower colour:** cream-yellow, daffodil, pale yellow | **Flowering period:** April - May | **Leaf colour:** grey-green, underside grey-green | **Leaves:** deciduous, ovoid, lanceolate, undulate, Nitrogen fixing | **Autumn colour:** yellow-green | **Fruits:** striking, rich fruit yield, edible, small, drupe | **Fruit colour:** red | **Bark colour:** dark brown | **Bark:** slightly furrowed | **Twig colour:** dark brown | **Twigs:** thorned, hairy | **Root system:** extensive, highly branched, root suckers

