

Weed of The Week

Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellate*)

The first weed of the week for 2021 features Autumn Olive, referred to as an invasive deciduous shrub. Autumn Olive originated in China and Japan, later introduced to the United States around 1830. The reason for introducing this shrub was that it served as an excellent wind break and wildlife habitat. Unfortunately, it has a habit of growing very rapidly and overtaking other desired species in turn becoming restriction for wildlife. Autumn Olive will grow to heights of 30 ft tall and have small oval leaves with smooth margins. Leaves are dark green on the top surface and silver on the bottom portion of the leaf. This plant produces small light-yellow flowers in late May to early June. Then later producing small red or pink berries. These berries are consumed by bird then in turn help spread the species across the landscape. Autumn Olive also has Rhizomes that help spread the plant even faster, these Rhizomes are leguminous in nature (self-fixing nitrogen). Autumn Olive can be found growing in a wide array of locations but prefers woodland edges, fallow fields, and roadside areas. Control of this invasive is a challenge but can be done with multiple modes of attack. Mechanical cutting can be successful but intensive in labor, removal of the whole root system is needed for success. Cutting and spraying with herbicides seem to be the most effective means of control. Cutting the shrub and then spaying the stump with herbicides like crossbow, glyphosate and crop oil or petroleum product has good results.

