

Burning Bush
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One of my favorite shrubs in my country home was burning bush, *Euonymus alatus*. During the summer the shrub had full green foliage and in the fall turned a brilliant red with red berries. It is hard to learn that something as well liked as this shrub is not a desirable plant because it is invasive and harmful to the landscape.

Euonymus alatus is not native to this country. It is native to northeastern Asia, Japan, and Central China. It was brought to this county in the 1860's as a landscape plant.

It is a deciduous shrub that can grow as tall as 15 to 20 feet. There are cultivars in smaller size like "Compactus" up to 10 feet, "Pipsqueak" only 5 feet and "Little Moses" of 30-36 inches.

Burning bush is easy to grow and is tolerant of full sun to shade. It is easy to prune and has few pest problems. It has been planted in hedge rows, along highways, or as a focal point in foundation planting.

The shrubs have a branching structure – mine always had a nicely rounded form of dense foliage. The bark is gray brown and the stems have corky wings. For excellent pictures, see "Burning Bush" at extension.psu.edu/burning-bush.

The dark green leaves of the shrub are arranged oppositely. They are elongated ovals of 1-3 inches with serrated edges. In the fall the leaves turn a bright red, adding brilliant color to the fall landscape.

Flowers form in the spring in late May and are not very noticeable. The fruit ripens the same time as the leaves are turning. It is bright red ovals about ½ inch in size.

The fruit is attractive to birds and that is how it becomes invasive. The birds carry the seed to forested areas and the plant spreads. In the forest it grows as an understory plant and crowds out the native plants.

Maryland names this a Tier 2 Invasive plant. Landscapers cannot supply this plant unless they give customers a list of Tier 2 Invasive plants. Connecticut has a special note about its invasive tendencies. New Hampshire lists it as a prohibited species.

According to the Ohio Farm Bureau "the good news is that invasive species are controllable." This is true of burning bush. Penn State Extension notes that it does not "spread as aggressively as other invasive shrubs." There is a larger window for herbicidal control because it leafs out early and drops its foliage late.

It can be treated from early May until October. For specific chemical controls, refer to extension.psu.edu.

Small plants can easily be pulled out of the ground. Even for larger plants, the plant can be killed without chemicals by using garden tools to remove most of the roots.

So what do you use in your landscape instead? Purdue University suggests several native plants. Some choices are chokeberry, fothergilla gardenii, Oakleaf hydrangea, bottlebrush buckeye, sweetspire and viburnum. For pictures of these plants visit <http://mip.arboretum.purdue.edu/> at the Purdue Arboretum Explorer website.

Hard choices – to remove a favorite shrub and help our native environment or to leave it be and see it invade the neighboring forests and woods. But at the very least you can choose not to introduce it into your landscape as a new plant.