

Siberian Elm

Ulmus pumila



Description

Appearance: Deciduous tree, 30-60' high with an open rounded crown and slender, spreading branches. Bark is dark gray and shallowly furrowed on a mature tree. Silver-gray twigs have a zig-zag shape with a leaf bud at each turn.

Leaves: Alternate, small, (1-2"), elliptic, toothed, short-pointed at the tip, slightly uneven at the base (much less than American elm).

Flowers: Greenish, lacking petals and occurring in small, compact, drooping clusters of 2-5, appear before leaves develop.

Fruit: Winged, round, and smooth, contains on seeds; fruit hangs in clusters.

Tree Habitat: It grows readily in disturbed areas with poor soils and low moisture. The tree can invade and dominate disturbed prairies in just a few years. It is still sold commercially as a shelterbelt and windbreak tree.

Buckthorn

Rhamnus cathartical/Frangula alnus



Glossy Buckthorn



Common Buckthorn

Description

Appearance: Common Buckthorn (CB) & Glossy Buckthorn (GB) Tall understory shrub or small tree, grows up to 20' high, has a spreading loosely branched crown, often multiple stems at the base. Brown bark with elongate silvery corky projections (Caution: native plums or cherries have a similar bark).

Branches: (CB&GB) Cut branch exposes yellow sapwood and orange heartwood. Twigs often end in stout thorns.

Leaves: (CB) Alternate, sometimes opposite; broadly elliptic pointed at the tip, smooth, dark glossy and small-toothed. Leaves stay green late into fall. **(GB)** Alternate, thick, and ovate or elliptic smooth, dark glossy, margins are not toothed; stay green late into fall.

Flowers: (CB&GB) Inconspicuous, appear in May or June, clustered in the axils of leaves.

Fruit: (CB) Clusters of black ¼ inch fruit ripen on female plants in Aug. or Sept. Seeds are viable for 2-3 years in the soil. **(GB)** Ripens progressively from a distinctive red to a dark purple in Aug. and Sept.

Tree Habitat: (CB) Aggressively invades oak forests, savannas, prairies, riparian woods on well-drained soils. **(GB)** Aggressively invades wetlands including acidic bogs, calcareous fens and sedge meadows. Also grows in upland habitats, tolerates full sun to deep shade.

Common and glossy buckthorn is on the MDA "Restricted noxious weeds" list in Minnesota.

Amur Maple

Acer ginnala



Description

Appearance: Amur maple is a small tree up to 20' high with a broad crown, but sometimes pruned as a hedge. Twigs are smooth and light colored.

Leaves: Opposite, longer than wide and have three shallow lobes and double toothed edges, turning a brilliant red in fall.

Flowers: Fragrant flowers appear in loose clusters with young leaves in May and June.

Fruit: Numerous reddish, two-winged, inch-long fruit mature in late summer.

Tree Habitat: Amur maple displaces native shrubs and understory trees in open woods, and shades out native grasses and herbaceous plants in savanna habitat. It is still being frequently sold commercially as an ornamental, and for wildlife and shelterbelt plantings.

Garlic Mustard

Alliaria petiolata



Spring



Summer



Fall

Description

Appearance: Biennial herbaceous plant with weak single stems 12-36" high, which flowers in its second year. The only plants of this height blooming white in wooded environments in May.

Leaves: Round, scallop-edged, dark green; first year, rosettes of 3 or 4 leaves; second year plants have alternate stem leaves. Leaves and stems smell like onion or garlic when crushed. **Flowers:** White, small and numerous, with four separate petals. Each plant has one or two flowering stems on second year plants.

Seeds: Slender capsules 1-2½" long, containing a single row of oblong black seeds. Seeds are viable in the soil for 5 years.

Plant Habitat: Garlic mustard spreads also into high quality woodlands upland and floodplain forests, not just into disturbed areas.

Trail Ambassador's Plant Guide

An identification guide for invasive terrestrial plants in Minnesota



Exotic Honeysuckle

Lonicera tartarica, Lonicera morrowii, Lonicera x bella



Description

Appearance: Upright deciduous shrubs, 5-12' high. *Lonicera x bella* is a horticultural hybrid. Older stems have shaggy bark and are often hollow.

Leaves: Opposite, simple, oval, and untoothed. *L. tartarica* has smooth, hairless leaves, *L. morrowii* has downy leaves.

Flowers: Fragrant, tubular, bloom in May and June, white, red but most often pink.

Fruit: Fruits are red or yellow, situated in pairs in the leaf axils.

Plant Habitat: Exotic honeysuckle replace native forest shrubs and herbaceous plants by their invasive nature and early leaf-out. They shade out herbaceous ground cover and deplete soil moisture.

Common Tansy

Tanacetum vulgare



Description

Appearance: Perennial herbaceous plant, 3' tall, up to 5' in shaded areas, and erect. A single stem branches extensively toward the top into short stems forming a flat-topped cluster of numerous button-like flower heads; plants have medicinal properties.

Leaves: Alternate, pinnately compound (leaflets arranged on both sides of a common stalk), irregularly lobed. Leaves become smaller towards the top of the stalk, and are strongly aromatic when crushed.

Flowers: Bright yellow daisy-like discs up to 1/2" wide, lacking rays, blooming from July through October.

Seeds: Numerous tufted seed dispersed by wind and water.

Plant Habitat: It is common along roadsides and abandoned farmyards in northern Minnesota and along the north shore of Lake Superior. South facing open areas are most vulnerable.

Common tansy is on the MDA "Secondary noxious weeds" list in Minnesota.

Wild Parsnip

Pastinaca sativa



Description

Appearance: Monocarpic perennial herbaceous plant (plant spends one or more years in rosette stage, blooms under favorable conditions, and then dies), 6" high in the rosette stage and 4' high on stout, grooved stems in the flowering stage.

Leaves: Alternate, leaf is made up of 5-15 egg-shaped leaflets along both sides of a common stalk; leaflets sharply-toothed or lobed at the margins; upper leaves smaller.

Flowers: Flat-topped broad flower cluster 2-6" wide, numerous five-petaled yellow flowers; blooms from June to late summer.

Seeds: Small, flat, round, slightly ribbed, straw-colored, abundant take 3 weeks to ripen before they can reseed; viable in the soil for 4 years.

Plant Habitat: It readily moves into disturbed habitats, along edges and/or in disturbed patches. It invades slowly, but once population builds it spreads rapidly and can severely modify open dry, moist, and wet-moist habitats.

Caution – Avoid skin contact with the sap of the plant tissue by wearing gloves, long sleeves and long pants. The juice of wild parsnip in contact with skin in the presence of sunlight can cause a rash and blistering and discoloration of the skin.



Spotted Knapweed

Centaurea maculosa



Description

Appearance: Biennial or short-lived perennial herbaceous plant, 2-3' high. Basal leaves form a rosette the first year from which grow 1-20 wiry, hoary, branched stems during the second year. **Leaves:** Alternate, grayish, hoary, and divided into lance-shaped lobes decreasing in size at the top.

Flowers: Thistle-like pink to purple flowers sit at the tips of terminal and axillary stems, bloom from July through September.

Seeds: Brownish, 1/4" long with small tufts of bristles, dispersed by rodents, livestock and commercial hay. Seed viable in the soil for 7 years.

Plant Habitat: Spotted knapweed spreads rapidly in artificial corridors, gravel pits, agricultural fields margins and overgrazed pastures.

Caution - Wear long sleeves and gloves, can be a skin irritant to some people.

Spotted knapweed is on the MDA "Secondary noxious weeds" list in Minnesota.

Leafy Spurge

Euphorbia esula



Description

Appearance: Perennial herbaceous plant, 2-3 1/2 tall, erect branching, smooth stems growing from a deep vertical root. Stems, flowers, and leaves emit a white milky sap when broken.

Leaves: Alternate, small, oblong to lance-shaped, on the upper part of stem; scale-like on the lower part of the stem.

Flowers: Small, borne by showy yellow-green bracts which open in late May; flowers bloom from June into fall. Umbrella-shaped flower cluster, 7-10, at the top of each stem, single, stemmed flowers from leaf axils below.

Seeds: Explosive dispersal from a seed capsule up to 15'; high germination rate; seeds remain viable in the soil for 7 years.

Plant Habitat: Tolerant of a wide range of habitats, from dry to moist, and sunny to semi-shade. Invades primarily non-cropland disturbed environments such as roadsides.

Leafy spurge is on the MDA "Prohibited noxious weeds" list in Minnesota.

Orange Hawkweed

Hieracium aurantiacum



Description

Appearance: Perennial herbaceous plant, 10-20" high; each hairy stem bears one or a dense cluster of dandelion-like, orange or yellow flowerheads. The stem grows from a basal rosette of hairy leaves. Hawkweeds colonize and can rapidly dominate a site. They grow well on disturbed, dry low-productivity soils.

Leaves: Hairy rosette made up of entire or minutely toothed leaves, spatula-shaped, 4-6" long. They are dark green above and lighter green beneath.

Flowers: Bright yellow or orange dandelion-like, 1/2" to 3/4" in diameter; arranged in a dense flat-topped cluster of flowers.

Seeds: Each flower bears 12-30 tiny, columnar seeds with a light-brown tuft of bristles for wind dispersal. Seeds are viable in the soil for up to 7 years.

Plant Habitat: Orange hawkweed invades northern moist pastures, forest openings, abandoned fields, clearcuts and roadsides. **Note:** There are two native hawkweeds in Minnesota, which differ from non-native hawkweeds.

Orange hawkweed is listed on the MDA "Secondary noxious weeds" list in Minnesota.