

Native Alternatives to Non-Native Invasive Plants in your Landscape

Suggestions from the Native Herb Conservation Committee

The Herb Society of America, Inc.



A. altissima, Luis Garcia Fernandez. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ailanthus-altissima.jpg>

Tree of heaven, *Ailanthus altissima*

This tree, also known as Chinese sumac or paradise tree, grows to 80 feet in height. Clusters of flowers appear at the ends of branches between April and June. It grows quickly and colonizes by root sprouts. Even worse, each tree can produce as many as 325,000 windborne seeds each year, and secretes toxins that suppress competing plants. It arrived in this country in 1784 as an ornamental.

Native alternatives: hop-hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*), staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*), sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*), black haw (*Viburnum prunifolium*), spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), yellowwood (*Cladrastis lutea*)



Rhus typhina, staghorn sumac (can form colonies)



Asian bittersweet, *Celastrus orbiculatus*

This is a deciduous, woody vine that will scramble 60 feet into the crown of a tree and form thickets along the ground, but it is the yellow-orange berries from August to January that draw attention. Twining vines such as this and honeysuckle are stranglers that can eventually kill even large old trees by cutting off the circulation in the outer bark. It colonizes by prolific vine and root growth and its abundant seeds, which are spread by birds and other animals. It hybridizes with *C. scandens*, American bittersweet, further jeopardizing the native bittersweet. It has been in this country since 1736, and resembles grape vines.

Photo: USDA Plants Database

Native alternative: Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) turns a beautiful red in fall.



Parthenocissus quinquefolia, Virginia creeper



Autumn olive, silverthorn, and Russian olive, *Elaeagnus umbellata*, *E. pungens*, *E. angustifolia*

Autumn olive, introduced in 1830 from China and Japan, grows to 20 feet and has sparse, thorny branches. The deciduous leaves are silvery beneath. The shrub produces fragrant yellow flowers from spring through summer and red berries in the fall. Two related plants are silverthorn and Russian olive. Silverthorn, or thorny olive, is a large evergreen shrub often planted for screening. Unlike autumn olive, it flowers in the fall and produces fruit in the spring. Russian olive is also a thorny shrub or small tree that grows to 35 feet. Its long narrow leaves are slightly silvery above with silver scales beneath. Fragrant yellow flowers appear April to July. The fruit resembles a small yellow-green olive.

Native alternatives: possumhaw (*Viburnum nudum*), winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*), maple-leafed viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*).



Chionanthus virginicus, fringetree



English ivy, *Hedera helix*

This evergreen vine will climb to 90 feet by clinging aerial roots, or trail to form a dense ground cover. The woody vine can grow to 10 inches in diameter and produces small greenish flowers in the summer and dark berries in the fall. It can infect oaks, elms, and maples with disease and a tree with a heavy burden of ivy is more likely to topple in high winds or winter storms.

Native alternatives: Allegheny-spurge (*Pachysandra procumbens*), cross vine (*Bignonia capreolata*), green and gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*), Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolius*), Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*)



Pachysandra procumbens, Allegheny-spurge



Periwinkle, *Vinca minor*, *V. major*

This evergreen vine trails 3 to 5 feet or more and grows up to 12 inches tall with violet pinwheel-shaped flowers in the spring. It once was a favorite for blanketing gravesites and was commonly called “grave yard grass.” It forms dense mats, choking out more desirable plants. This plant was introduced from Europe in the 1700s. A close relative, *Vinca major*, is larger in all respects and equally troublesome.

Native alternatives: partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*), Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*)



Asarum canadense, wild ginger (deciduous)



Nandina, *Nandina domestica*

This shade-tolerant, evergreen shrub grows to 8 feet high and is best known for its bright-red berries in fall and winter. Nandina is widely planted as an ornamental and frequently shows up uninvited in gardens and forest edges. It colonizes by root sprouts and is further spread as animals and birds disperse the seeds.

Native alternatives: hearts-a-bustin (*Euonymus americanus*), inkberry holly (*Ilex glabra*), fothergilla (*Fothergilla gardenii* or *F. major*), yellowroot (*Xanthorhiza simplicissima*), winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*), American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*), sweet shrub (*Calycanthus floridus*), sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*)

Photo: Kenpei, wikipedia



Euonymus americanus, hearts-a-bustin



Princess tree, *Paulownia tomentosa*

This deciduous tree, growing to 60 feet in height and 2 feet in diameter, has large, heart-shaped, fuzzy leaves, and fragrant, pale-violet springtime flowers. Thousands of tiny, winged seeds are held in terminal clusters of pecan-shaped capsules in summer to winter. This fast-growing tree infests forest edges, roadsides, and gardens, colonizing from root sprouts. Paulownia came to this country in the early 1800s as an ornamental and as a source for lumber.

Native alternatives: pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), catalpa (*Catalpa bignonioides*), fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*), cucumber magnolia (*Magnolia acuminata*), yellow buckeye (*Aesculus octandra*), sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboretum*), redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), dogwood (*Cornus florida*)



Cercis canadensis, redbud



Wisteria, *Wisteria sinensis*, *W. floribunda*

These deciduous woody vines can climb or trail to 70 feet. Showy violet to white, fragrant flowers dangle in clusters from March to May. Wisteria grows on wet or dry sites, and colonizes by running vines that root at nodes. It was introduced in the 1800s as an ornamental. Chinese and Japanese wisterias are similar in appearance.

Native alternatives: trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*), crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*)



Campsis radicans, trumpet creeper



Chinese, European privet, *Ligustrum sinense*, *L. vulgare*

These semi-evergreen to evergreen, thicket-forming shrubs are difficult to tell apart, although Chinese privet is more widespread. Privet may reach 30 feet in height and has long leafy branches that arch or lean. Fragrant flowers appear from April to June in clusters at the tips of branches. Colonizing by root sprouts and seed dispersed by birds, privet spreads aggressively in fields, along roadsides, and in forests.

Photo: James R. Allison, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Bugwood.org

Native alternatives: inkberry holly (*Ilex glabra*), wild olive (*Osmanthus americanus*), Carolina rhododendron (*Rhododendron minus*)



Ilex glabra, inkberry holly



Japanese honeysuckle, *Lonicera japonica*

This evergreen to semi-evergreen, and depending on temperature sometimes deciduous, vine is so common that many assume it is native. Introduced from Japan in the early 1800s, honeysuckle now grows rampant in gardens, forests, and rights-of-way. It will root at vine nodes, and has a thick, persistent root stock.

Native alternatives: coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), yellow jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*)



Lonicera sempervirens, coral honeysuckle

Information sources:

A Field Guide to the Invasive Plants of the Midwest, Midwest Invasive Plant Network. <http://mipn.org/>

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“Invasive Plants in Southern California,” Univ. of California Agriculture and Natural Resources. <http://groups.ucanr.org/socalinvasives/>

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