

Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

Guelder rose

Viburnum opulus var. *opulus*



Dow Gardens, www.forestryimages.org

Background:

Cultivated varieties of guelder rose were planted as ornamentals starting in the second half of the 17th century. North America is already home to another variety of the same species, American cranberry bush (*Viburnum opulus* var. *americanum*).

Range:

Native to Eurasia and North Africa, guelder rose can now be found in the northern half of North America, from Newfoundland to southern British Columbia and as far south as Virginia.

Description:

This deciduous shrub grows up to 12 feet tall. Its leaves are coarsely toothed and maple-like in appearance, with three shallow lobes. The white flowers occur in wide clusters, the outer of which are sterile and five-petaled, forming a ring around the smaller, less showy, fertile flowers. In August, the bright red, juicy berries ripen in bunches.

Biology and Spread:

Guelder rose spreads to new locations by seed. Its bright red berries attract birds, which can carry seeds across long distances.

Ecological Threat:

Guelder rose displaces native plants through competition. Its tolerance of a wide range of habitats is cause for concern because it is capable of invading rare ecosystems, including fens, sandplains and limestone glades. This shrub has a reported ability to interbreed with our native variety, American cranberry bush, which could contaminate its gene pool.



Dow Gardens

Habitat:

Tolerant of a wide range of moisture and pH conditions, this shrub colonizes a variety of habitats, including forests, floodplains, wetlands, stream banks, bogs, fields and roadsides.

How to Control this Species:

Physical

Plants less than three feet tall should be hand-pulled before the root system becomes established. Taller shrubs can be cut at ground level.

Chemical

To avoid re-sprouting, glyphosate herbicide should be applied to freshly cut stumps. This will destroy the root system.

Look-A-Likes:

Guelder rose can easily be confused with our native variety. Be careful when purchasing American cranberry bush; mislabeling is common. Guelder rose can usually be identified by the presence of large, saucer-shaped glands on its leafstalks.



John Hixson
www.wildflower.org



Guelder Rose, Dow Gardens