

# Monthly Invasive Plant Highlight

## July 2020



### Invasive Plant of the Month: Chinese Privet

Chinese Privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), also called Small-leaf Privet and Chinese Ligustrum, was introduced into the United States from China for ornamental planting. It is used for hedge and mass plantings, and sometimes as single specimens for its foliage and its profusion of small white flowers. Unfortunately, it continues to be widely sold in the nursery and gardening industry. Having escaped from cultivation, it is now naturalized throughout the southeastern United States.

According to the [Weed Science Society of America \(WSSA\)](#), Chinese Privet now occupies over two and half million acres of land across 12 states ranging from Virginia to Florida and west to Texas, with detrimental effects to biodiversity and forest health.



*Chinese Privet blooms*

*Ligustrum sinense* is a deciduous shrub growing from 5 to 30 feet tall (mostly trimmed to 5 to 8 feet in yards), with densely hairy shoots. The leaves are opposite, 1 to 3 inches long and ½ –1 inch broad, rarely larger. The flowers are white, with a four-lobed corolla. The fruit is a small, roundish, blue berry and considered poisonous.

Chinese privet reproduces by sexual and vegetative means. Seeds, produced in great abundance, are spread by birds. Soil disturbances of all sorts provide opportunities for colonization.

### Please Remove It!

**If you find Chinese Privet in your yard, please remove it.** For small areas and for relatively small plants, hand removal is effective. Digging tools such as a mattock are useful for removing underground parts. Broken root fragments need to be removed because of their ability to re-sprout. Repeated mowing and cutting will control the spread of privet but will not eradicate it. Leaves and twigs may sprout to start new plants, so **please put removed plant and any parts into the trash. DO NOT add to your household compost or to yard waste picked up by the city.**

Information about Chinese Privet:

<https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/profile/chinese-privet>

[https://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg\\_lisi.pdf](https://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_lisi.pdf)



*Chinese Privet bush with unripe berries*

## Why Native Plants?

*As open space disappears, it is necessary to look at our own landscapes for biodiversity.* Native plants promote the unique relationships between our native plants and animals, from the smallest microorganisms, insects and other invertebrates to birds and mammals.

Native plants, from grasses and wildflowers to towering shade trees, form the base of the food chain. Our native insects are uniquely adapted to eat native plants; some are generalists and can eat a variety of plants, but many are specialists that can only digest certain types of leaves based on the chemistry of the plant.

Research by the entomologist Doug Tallamy has shown that native oak trees support over 500 species of caterpillars whereas ginkgos, a commonly planted landscape tree from Asia, host only 5 species of caterpillars. When it takes over 6,000 caterpillars to raise one brood of chickadees, that is a significant difference.

### More information on native plants:

[www.vnps.org/natives](http://www.vnps.org/natives)

[www.plantnovanatives.org](http://www.plantnovanatives.org)

[www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder](http://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder)

[www.audubon.org/native-plants](http://www.audubon.org/native-plants)

### More information on invasive plants:

[www.invasiveplantatlas.org](http://www.invasiveplantatlas.org)

[www.invasive.org](http://www.invasive.org)



*Native Virginia Bluebells*

## Who We Are?

The City of Falls Church Habitat Restoration Team restores the local ecosystem in city parks. We remove damaging invasive plants then re-plant with natives that benefit our local birds, butterflies, bees, and pollinators.

We are a community task force that supports the City's Green Space department. We have monthly events in the Fall and Spring open to volunteers.

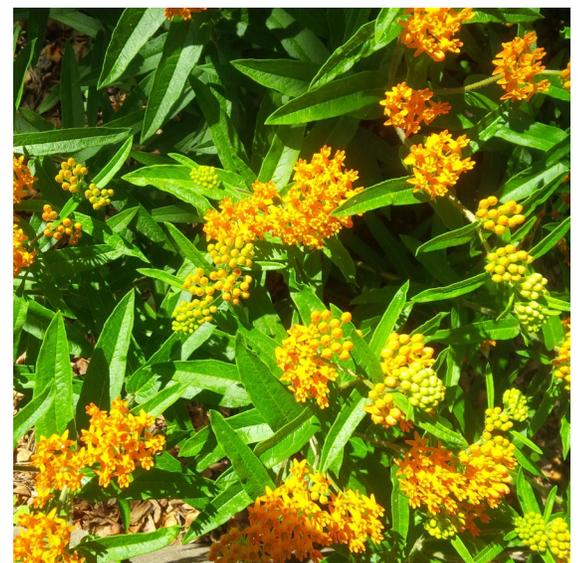
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*Native Butterfly Weed*