TECHNICAL NOTE

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AUTUMN OLIVE - INVASIVE WILDLIFE PLANT

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INTRODUCTION:

USDA policy states that the Federal Government will not authorize, fund, or carry out actions that it believes are likely to cause or promote the introduction or spread of invasive species in the United States or elsewhere. Autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) is recognized as an invasive in Georgia's forests (Evans et al., 2006). It is also listed as a nonnative invasive plant for forests in the entire Southeastern United States (Miller, 2003). Autumn olive has even become widespread enough to require control measures (Miller, 2002). The Georgia Exotic Pest Plant Council lists autumn olive as an invasive weed in Georgia and, recommends several herbicides for control (www.gaeppc.org). Due to the potential harm from this introduced wildlife plant, the USDA-NRCS Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center (PMC) in Americus, Georgia is in the process of officially discontinuing 'Ellagood'. The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center no longer produces or promotes the use of this plant for wildlife planting or any other conservation use. The Plant Materials Center encourages NRCS personnel to advise landowners to use alternative native plant species for wildlife plantings. Biologists from NRCS and Georgia Department of Natural Resources also suggest using other native alternatives for wildlife habitat. Alternatives can include blackberry ,plums ,sumac ,hawthorn, eastern red cedar, dwarf chinquapin oak, crabapple, and wax myrtle. A list of native plant nurseries can be found at www.plantnative.org and www.afnn.org.

HISTIORY/BACKGROUND:

Autumn Olive was introduced to the United States around 1830 from China and Japan. It has been widely planted for wildlife food, wildlife shelter, mine reclamation, and windbreaks. It is shade tolerant and can grow on a wide variety of soil types. It can invade old fields, open woods, woodland edges, and other disturbed sites. It has an aggressive growth habit and can spread by bird and mammal dispersal. If left unchecked autumn olive can form dense stands.

' Ellagood' autumn olive was released in 1986 by the Jimmy Carter PMC and the Jamie L. Whitten PMC in Coffeeville Mississippi. It was released for several purposes as mentioned previously but the primary intended use was as a wildlife food and shelter plant.

IDENTIFICATION FEATURES:

'Ellagood' is a spreading, upright, nitrogen-fixing shrub. It grows approximately 15 feet tall and may attain a width of 10-12 feet. It has smooth brown or yellowish-brown bark except on old stems which can be somewhat scaly. Some lateral twigs often become spur twigs and resemble thorns. Alternate leaves 2 to 3 inches long and 1 to 1.5 inches wide vary in shape from narrow to moderately wide with wavy edges. Leaf color is pale olive-green with a silvery scaly cast especially on the underside of the leaf surface. Flowers appear in spring. They are fragrant, four lobed, trumpet-shaped and pale-yellow in color. 'Ellagood' produces an astringent fruit .3 to .4 inches wide, which varies from yellow to red with small speckles.

‘Ellagood’ was selected for late fruit retention and can maintain fruit on the shrub well into the winter months especially in the coastal plain areas. Abundant fruit production starts about 4 to 5 years after establishment. These fruit are very attractive to many animals especially birds. Therefore the birds become the main vector for seed dispersal into open and wooded areas.

LITERATURE CITED

Evans, C.W., C.T Bargeron, D.J. Moorehead, and G.H. Douce. 2006. Invasive plants of Georgia’s forests. BW-2006-02.

Miller, J.H. 2002. Exotic pest plants and their control.USDA FS Pub. Feb. 25 2002.

Miller, J.H. 2003. Nonnative invasive plants of southern forests. USDA FS SRS-62

Immature Fruit of ‘Ellagood’ Autumn Olive

Mature fruit of ‘ Ellagood ’

Underside of ‘ Ellagood ’ leaf