

Elaeagnaceae

oleaster family

Of the three genera of woody plants, two are found in Nova Scotia. One is native and one is introduced. Shrubs or small trees, all have scaly bark and leaves. In addition the leaves are simple, their margins entire. Flowers may be solitary or arranged in umbels or racemes, perfect or unisexual. Hypanthium of staminate flowers is of a different shape from that of the pistillate flowers. Stamens are inserted and equal the number of sepals or double. Fruits are dry achenes, subtended by a fleshy or mealy hypanthium forming a berry or drupe.

Key to genera

- Small tree; leaves alternate; flowers with 4 stamens. *Elaeagnus*
- Small shrub; leaves opposite; flowers with 8 stamens. *Shepherdia*

***Elaeagnus* L.**

Asian temperate and subtropical regions are the origins of this genus of 50–60 small trees or shrubs. Generally armed, and with silvery or rusty scaly leaves, the flowers are usually fragrant. Petals are absent; calyx is four-merous. Both are introductions and may be somewhat invasive.

Key to species

- Fully expanded leaves with abundant silvery scales on both surfaces; fruit yellow and mealy. *Elaeagnus angustifolia*
- Fully expanded leaves with abundant silvery scales on the lower surface only; fruit red, juicy. *E. umbellata*

Elaeagnus angustifolia* L.*Silverberry; Oleaster; Russian Olive; olivier de Bohême***Photo by Marian Munro*

With silvery bark and lanceolate leaves, this tree somewhat resembles aspen at a distance; its leaves often in motion with the slightest breeze. It is armed with thorns. Fragrant flowers are borne in clusters 1–3 per inflorescence. Fruit is yellow or orange and mealy.

Specimen tree or hedgerow planting, persisting after cultivation and spreading, especially in sandy soil

Known from Halifax, Wolfville and Windsor.
Found throughout North America, except for the extreme southeast.

Elaeagnus umbellata* Thunb.*Autumn Olive; oléastre à ombelles**

Similar to Russian Olive, although the fruit is red and juicy and abundantly produced.

Only recently discovered as an escape in Nova Scotia and potentially invasive. Ditches and roadsides.

Recently found to be spreading along the Highway 101 verges as at Nictaux, Annapolis Co. and at Avonport, Kings Co. in similar habitat. Falmouth, Hants Co.

Found in ON and throughout the eastern US.

***Shepherdia* Nutt.**

North American in distribution, three species comprise the genus. All are dioecious, with the flowers borne in small clusters on the previous year's wood. Sepals are yellow green; petals are absent.

Hypanthium has an eight-lobed disk atop it, the stamens alternating with the lobes. Fruit is a berry with no stone.

***Shepherdia canadensis* (L.) Nutt.**

Rabbit-berry; Shepherdia; Russet Buffaloberry; sh  pherdie du Canada



Photo by Martin Thomas

A small shrub and one of only a handful in NS, having very scaly buds, leaves and twigs. Leaves are broadly lanceolate and opposite. The scales are silvery and covered with rusty spots.

Flowers from April to June throughout its range.

Found on talus slopes, especially on gypsum soils.

Local in NS but abundant where found: northern Cape Breton and around Brooklyn and Windsor, Hants Co.

Found throughout North America, but for the southeast.



Photo by David Mazerolle

