

Thorny elaeagnus - *Elaeagnus pungens*

Shrub Profile

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Thorny elaeagnus (*Elaeagnus pungens* and closely related *E. x ebbingei*) is a good option for a screen/hedge plant in Arkansas. Not only is it a tough hedge plant, but it also has a fragrance in fall. Sometimes when we say plants have fragrant flowers we mean you must stick your nose deep into the petals to enjoy the smell. Not so with this plant—you can be 50' away and smell this plant's sweet fragrance! Ironically, the 1/3" long, tubular, silvery white flower is barely visible. Flowering begins in September and continues into December. Bees love these flowers.

Every so often, you might see fruit that looks like a speckled copy of the red, oval-shaped fruit on corneliancherry dogwood (*Cornus mas*). The 5/8"-long fruit is covered with silvery scales that dull the surface. The same scales are found on the cream-white flower petals and the underside of leaves. The rarity of the fruit may make this plant less likely to become invasive, unlike its gray-leafed cousin, the Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*).

Foliage on evergreen thorny elaeagnus is very clean. The upper leaf surface is a glossy medium to dark green, lightly dusted with silvery scales. The contrasting underside is so densely covered with silvery scales that it appears a silvery white. Leaves are mostly ovate, about 2" long, with no teeth/serrations along the leaf edge.

While a serious pest or disease problems are rare on this plant, established plants dying from some undiagnosed wilt-like disease have been reported. Thorny elaeagnus is very tolerant of full sun and will perform well in partial sun. It appears to be fairly tolerant of most soil types in Arkansas.

Be forewarned about the size of this plant—it will shoot up to 15' x 15' in a few years. Some people don't like the wild, long shoots, which make the plant look as though it is having a bad hair day. To avoid that antenna look, trim the plant twice per year. If you need a very fast growing, globe-shaped, hedge plant, and you can tolerate controlling the wild sprays of new growth, you may want to give this a spot in your garden.



Common Name: thorny elaeagnus
Flower Color: silvery white (small)
Blooming period: fall
Type: broadleaf evergreen shrub
Size: large shrub; 15' tall x 15' wide
Exposure: sun
Soil: very tolerant
Watering: very tolerant
When to prune: anytime
Suggested use: screen, hedge

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