

# HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET

CORNELL

Cooperative Extension  
Nassau County



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## Privets

The most common hedge plants in the United States and probably in Nassau County are the privets, belonging to the genus, *Ligustrum*. To many homeowners, the words "Hedge" and "Privet" are synonymous. Privets will grow in almost any kind of soil and under varied and adverse conditions. They are easily propagated and can take frequent and extensive clipping.

### Most common types:

#### *Ligustrum amurense* (Amur privet)

A trouble-free northern privet to 12' height, with width to two-thirds or equal the height. Dense multi-stemmed shrub with medium to fine leaf texture, creamy white flowers in spring, but unpleasantly fragrant (true of most *Ligustrums*). Adaptable to varying soil types and as a hedge, although Michael Dirr considers "there are many better hedging plants." (See **Manual of Woody Landscape Plants**, 5th ed.)

#### *L. obtusifolium* var. *regelianum* (Regal privet)

The preferred and more common variety, with horizontally-spreading branches arranged in a flat plane. With dark green glossy foliage, this variety is wider than tall at maturity. It is most appropriately used as a utilitarian/filler for mass plantings and is the most maintenance (pruning) and trouble free of all privets.

#### *L. ovalifolium* (California privet)

The common privet used for hedges and screening. Large (10-15') and vigorous, forming a dense thicket of upright branches. Foliage is a lustrous, glossy green, which can persist well into the winter. Although it thrives on neglect, if not located in an open, sunny site, plant will grow leggy and sparse.

*L. japonicum* (Japanese privet) and *L. lucidum* (glossy privet) are two large evergreen species with large (2-5" long) lustrous dark green foliage. Although it is once in a while seen growing in protected landscape sites on Long Island, its use is restricted (and should be) due to lack of winter hardiness.

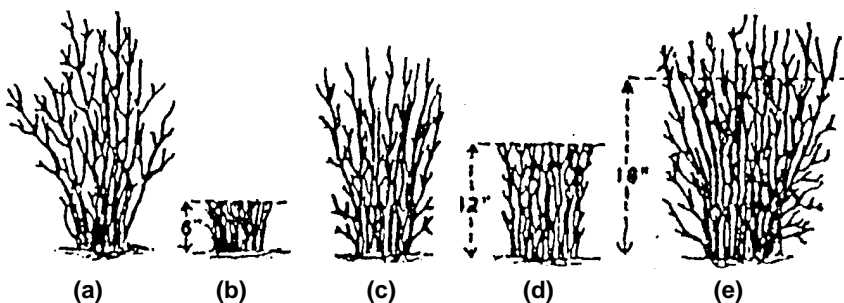
While privets can endure more neglect than many garden plants, proper attention to their cultural requirements will result in greater resistance to the onslaught of disease or garden pests.

If the intent for planting privet is a hedge, set small plants (15-30" high) in properly prepared soil and space them about 18" apart. Be sure to set the plants at the same height as they were growing in the nursery field.

Incorporate compost or peat moss and superphosphate into the thoroughly loosened soil of the planting trench. Cut the plants back to half their length. As they grow, shear them so that the bottom of the hedge is slightly wider than the top to permit light to reach the base. Fertilize every few years, water them deeply during extended drought periods and have hedge clippers sharp and ready to keep these fast growing hedge plants within bounds.

### Start a Privet Hedge Right!

- plants as set
- at once cut down to 6"
- allow to grow first season with no summer pruning
- at the end of first growing season cut back to 12"
- growth during second season may be cut back to 18 inches during the summer.



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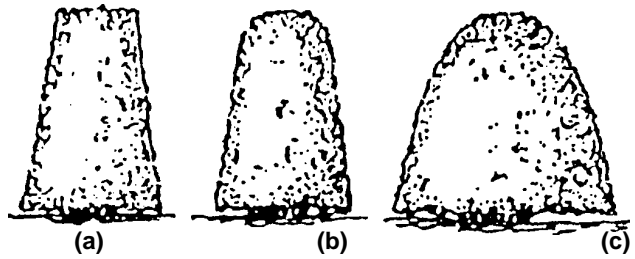
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## Forms Of Privet Hedges:

Start right and keep clipped as shown in (a), (b) or (c) - so sunlight can reach the base.

While privets are comparatively free from disease and insect pests and actually thrive on neglect, there are some problems that do occasionally trouble them in this area.

Privets do not perform well in areas of poor drainage. If plants are experiencing dieback, this may be the primary reason to consider as the cause.



## Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

### Considerations

IPM is a common sense approach to pest control and plant care. It employs a number of measures to prevent, control or reduce plant problems. These include using resistant plant varieties, proper plant selection and placement, good aftercare and biological and/or mechanical controls. As a last resort, after all other remedies have been explored, a pesticide\* that is least toxic to people and natural predators, can be considered. Prior to using any pesticides, plants should always be monitored for the degree of infestation and a sensible control measure considered.

\* A pesticide is a substance that kills, or attempts to kill, a particular pest, e.g. **insecticide**, **fungicide**, **herbicide**, etc.

### Diseases

#### **Anthracnose, Twig Blight (*Glomerella cingulata*):**

Fungus disease causing blighting of twigs, development of cankers on stems and drying of leaves which cling to stems.

**Control:** Prune and destroy all diseased branches during dry weather and disinfect pruning tools between each cut. Amur, Regal, and California Privet are purported to be resistant. Chemical pesticides may be available. If you choose to use a chemical pesticide, contact your local Cooperative Extension office for specific recommendations. Spray weekly as long as disease is active.

### Insects and Other Garden Pests

**Japanese Weevil:** Brown, snouted beetle 1/4" long. Feeds on new, tender shoots and eats broad round sections from the margins of leaves.

**Control:** Chemical pesticides may be available. If you choose to use a chemical pesticide, contact your local Cooperative Extension office for specific recommendations. Spray beginning in July, and through late August when butterfly bush (*Buddleia*) is in bloom. 1644 - 2271 GDD

**Mites (privet rust mite):** Minute, soft-bodied, eight-legged creatures with sucking mouth parts. They suck sap from leaves which turn speckled or yellow and dry out.

**Control:** Chemical pesticides may be available. If you choose to use a chemical pesticide, contact your local Cooperative Extension office for specific recommendations. Spray underside of leaves in late May-June (when ruby horsechestnut is in bloom) and July when golden raintree (*Koelreuteria*) is in bloom.

**White Prunicola Scale:** Tiny armored scale. Female is round and dingy white. Male is rectangular, pure white and looks like a minute grain of rice. They suck sap from stems and branches with eventual loss of affected parts.

**Control:** Consult Home Grounds Fact Sheet E-1-38 on White Prunicola Scale.

**Privet thrips:** Tiny yellow, spindle-shaped larvae and dark brown to black adults (with a bright red band) can be sufficiently damaging to give privet a grayish/dusty appearance. Close-up, the foliage looks flecked or stippled.

**Control:** Chemical pesticides may be available. If you choose to use a chemical pesticide, contact your local Cooperative Extension office for specific recommendations. Upon observance, spray three (3) times at ten (10) day intervals.

*For explanation of Growing Degree Days (GDD), see Home Grounds Fact Sheet E-1-0.*



WHENEVER YOU USE A PESTICIDE,  
ALWAYS READ THE LABEL AND FOLLOW  
THE MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS  
AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

"This publication contains pesticide recommendations. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly and human errors are still possible. Some materials mentioned may no longer be available, and some uses may no longer be legal. All pesticides distributed, sold or applied in New York State must be registered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use in New York State should be directed to the appropriate Cornell Cooperative Extension specialist or your regional DEC office (631) 444-0341. Read the label before applying any pesticide. Cornell Cooperative Extension and its employees assume no liability for the effectiveness or results of any chemicals for pesticide usage. No endorsement of products is made or implied."