Euonymus species range from evergreen shrubs such as evergreen euonymus (*Euonymus japonicus*) to evergreen vines such as wintercreeper euonymus (*E. fortunei*). Some of the more common species are described here.

**American Euonymus (*Euonymus americanus*)**

This shrub is also known as strawberry bush or "Hearts-a-Busting." It is a deciduous, suckering shrub, 4 to 6 feet high. Leaves are medium green and up to 3 inches long. The greenish-purple flowers are a third of an inch in diameter and have 5 petals, which is unusual for euonymus (usually four-petaled). From September to October the showy scarlet seed capsules open to reveal purple insides and bright orange seeds.

![Colorful fruit of American euonymus](image1)

Colorful fruit of American euonymus
Chris Evans, River to River CWMA, www.insectimages.org

**Winged Euonymus (*Euonymus alatus*)**

This is a deciduous shrub, which grows to a height of 10 to 20 feet and similar spread, depending on the variety. The dark-green foliage turns brilliant red in fall. The flowers are ornamental and unimportant, yellow-green, and present in May and June. The plant likes partial shade to full sun and well-drained soil.

![“Wings” on bark of winged euonymus twigs.](image2)

“Wings” on bark of winged euonymus twigs.
Karen Russ, ©2008 HGIC, Clemson Extension

![Burning bush euonymus fall color.](image3)

Burning bush euonymus fall color. The Dow Gardens Archive, Dow Gardens, www.insectimages.org
Spindle Tree (*Euonymus europaeus*)
This is a deciduous small tree, which eventually may reach 30 feet in height. The dark green leaves turn yellowish red in fall. The fruits are the ornamental feature: bunches of red capsules open to reveal bright orange seeds. Spindle trees like full sun or partial shade.

Wintercreeper Euonymus (*Euonymus fortunei*)
This is an evergreen groundcover, 4 to 6 inches high, which can scramble 40 to 70 feet when placed on a structure. The range of leaf types is endless. The species has opposite dark green leaves that are an inch long or less. Flowers are greenish white and not very showy. Wintercreeper euonymus tolerates full sun and heavy shade.

Evergreen Euonymus (*Euonymus japonicus*)
This is a very dense, oval shrub when growing in full sun and more open in shade. It grows 10 to 15 feet high and about half that in width. The leaves are opposite, evergreen, leathery and 1 to 3 inches long. The flowers are greenish white and inconspicuous. The species is very tolerant of heat but prone to cold damage.

Spreading Euonymus (*Euonymus kiautschovicus*)
This evergreen shrub grows 8 feet high and as wide or wider, with some low branches trailing on the ground and rooting. The leaves are light green and 2 to 3 inches long. Flowers are greenish white. Bees and flies swarm the plant when it is in bloom in late summer, so it may not be a good choice near patio areas.

Growth Rate: Most euonymus species grow medium to fast (13 to 24 inches per year), except for *E. alatus*, which grows slowly (less then 12 inches per year), and wintercreeper euonymus, which grows very fast (25 inches per year or more).

Landscape Use: The landscape use of euonymus is unlimited: these plants are excellent for hedging, in groups, as a specimen plant, for borders and screening. *E. alatus* makes an excellent foundation plant because of horizontal lines and clean foliage. *E. fortunei* may be used as groundcover, vine, wall cover and low hedge, depending on the cultivar.

Cultivation: Euonymus plants are easy to grow. They transplant readily and tolerate most soils, except waterlogged conditions. Euonymus can grow in full sun to heavy shade. Deciduous kinds with fall color give a better display in full sun. Ideally, plants should be watered and mulched in hot, dry conditions. They withstand heavy pruning.

Problems: Euonymus scale, a white-covered scale insect, is the most serious pest. A severe infestation will make the underside of the leaves and the entire stem white. Unless controlled, this pest will eventually kill the plant. Refer to HGIC 2054, *Euonymus Diseases & Insect Pests* for more information on euonymus pests and diseases.
Cultivars & Varieties

Cultivars of *E. fortunei*: The cultivars of Wintercreeper Euonymus, which are listed here, are better known than the species itself.

- 'Canadale Gold' is a compact shrub with light green, yellow-edged leaves.
- 'Colorata' or purple leaf wintercreeper has leaves which turn dark purple in fall and winter.
- 'Emerald Gaiety' is a small, dense-growing, erect shrub with green leaves edged in white.
- 'Golden Prince' is an extremely hardy, hedge plant with new growth tipped gold. Older leaves turn green.
- Common wintercreeper or 'E. f. radicans' is a tough, trailing or vining shrub with dark green leaves.

Cultivars of *E. japonica*:

- Golden euonymus or 'Aureo-marginata' has bright golden foliage.
- Goldspot euonymus or 'Aureo-variegata' has leaves with yellow blotches and green edges.
- Box-leaf euonymus or 'Microphylla' is a small-leafed, compact shrub, usually trimmed as a hedge.
- 'Microphyllus Albovariegatus' is similar to box-leaf euonymus, but the leaves are splashed white.
- 'Silver King' has green leaves with silvery white edges.
- 'Silver Queen' has green leaves with creamy white edges.

Prepared by Marjan Kluepfel, HGIC Horticulture Specialist, and Bob Polomski, Extension Consumer Horticulturist, Clemson University.

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