It is time to get privet under control with a method that works in the late fall that most people can do! Glyphosate is a non-restricted use product that can be found at local places and at an affordable price. It is a non-selective herbicide product, thus why we want to use this method in the late fall. Let me explain why.

The non-native invasive plant known simply as privet, can be a worthy adversary for anyone unlucky enough to have this plant on their property. (For simplicity in this article, we are going to refer to all the various species of privet as simply privet).

One of the best ways to control privet is with a glyphosate application in late fall to early winter. Typically, around late October /early November until about December is the timeframe depending on geographic location in the state. The best time is when the desirable plant species you want to keep have gone dormant, yet the privet still has green leaves on its branches and the temperatures are still mild. Avoid cold weather, especially as temperatures begin to get near freezing.

Examples of situations to use this method. If you have young hardwoods that you are trying to keep but want the privet gone, you want the hardwood sprouts/saplings to drop their leaves while the privet still has theirs. The downside to this method is if you have small pines or other conifers that you are trying to save, as these will retain green needles during this time period and are susceptible, Extreme caution and care should be exercised if this is the case. The good news is that most of the time, privet thickets are usually so thick that nothing is growing underneath them to have to worry about.

Glyphosate comes in many different forms with the most common being Ready To Use (RTU) or 41% concentrate products. When performing privet control, the applicator will want to use a 41% or higher percentage concentrate product. RTU products oftentimes do not achieve good control due to the lower amount of material in the percent solution. The applicator will need to read the herbicide label of the product they are using, as this will tell them how many ounces/gal and/or percent solution to be applying for foliar privet control.

Surfactants help in the efficiency of the herbicide by improving absorption into the waxy covering on the leaves. Not all glyphosate products contain a surfactant already added. Reading the label on the product you have will tell if the product has a surfactant and/or if it should be added in the tank mix. If the label says add a surfactant, choose one that is a nonionic surfactant. Marking dyes can be added to the tank mix as well. In certain situations, such as treating in strips due to making passes, marking dyes are very helpful. Just know that if you add marking dye to your tank mix you can expect it on everything. Most places (such as farm & garden, feed & seed, agricultural cooperatives, etc.) should carry these products if needed.

The application method used to apply your glyphosate solution depends greatly on the situation you have and your equipment. Backpack sprayers, ATV sprayers and tractor 3-point hitch mounted
sprayers are popular methods of delivering this foliar application method. The applicator will want to spray foliage till wet, but not to the point of running off. Complete coverage of all foliage from top to bottom is key in getting control. The more leaf surface area you can contact with herbicide, the more material that will be absorbed into the plant, the better your chance at control. If equipment is not capable of delivering the herbicide to the top of the privet, you will want to explore other options, such as cutting/mulching the privet down first and then spraying the plant once it sprouts back. Another option may be to do a basal bark application on the bigger privet stems as a follow-up treatment.

Follow-up treatments are a must. As you eliminate mature plants and sunlight can hit the forest floor, something is going to grow in its place. Oftentimes it will be with germinated privet seed and/or root sprouts, not to mention new seed from neighboring properties. The key to eradication is persistence, thus spray those new stems as soon as possible and every time they re-sprout.

If controlling privet in and around water, make sure that you are using a glyphosate product and surfactant that have an aquatic label. Glyphosate products and surfactants used to control terrestrial plants oftentimes have formulations that are harmful to many aquatic organisms. Companies do make aquatic labeled products (such as glyphosate, surfactants, etc.) that have a different formulation designed to not harm aquatic organisms (fish, frogs, turtles, salamanders, etc.). Remember, the label is federal law.

Keep in mind drift concerns on windy days, especially since using a non-selective herbicide, to prevent killing and/or damaging desirable plant species.

You can use this method at other times of the year too. Just remember that glyphosate will kill other plants as the product lands on their green leaves/needles. Thus, the great thing about jumping on privet control soon, as desirable species are going into dormancy and privet is still hanging on.