European bird cherry

Prunus padus L.

Synonyms: None
Other common names: None
Family: Rosaceae

Description
Prunus padus is a shrub or small tree, growing up to 30 feet tall, with purplish gray to greenish bark. Leaves are long-petiolated up to 4 inches long, elliptic to obovate, sharply serrate. Flowers are showy, commonly numerous, borne in elongate terminal racemes, petals white or cream, mostly 4-6 mm long. Fruit are black, ovoid (Welsh 1974).

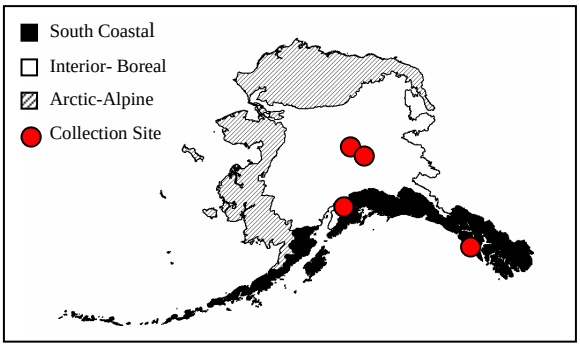

European bird cherry flowering stems

European bird cherry differs from other wild and garden cherries in having flowers in long cylindrical spikes.

Ecological Impact
Impact on community composition, structure, and interactions: European bird cherry can create tall shrub layer eliminating native willow layer and all layers below. It may also delay germination and growth of shade intolerant trees. European bird cherry can cause reduction of high quality willow-dominated foraging sites for moose. Fruits are desirable to birds (M.L. Carlson – pers. com., M. Shephard – pers. com.).
Impact on ecosystem process: European bird cherry likely reduces light, soil moisture and nutrient availability for other species (J. Conn – pers. com.). Very little is known about this species' impact on ecosystem processes, however.

Biology and Invasive Potential
Reproductive potential: European bird cherry reproduces by seeds and bare roots. Also propagated be cuttings. This plant has high seed abundance (USDA 2002). Seeds are viable for less than 1 year (Granström 1987).
Role of disturbance in establishment: Unknown.
Potential for long-distance dispersal: Fruits of European bird cherry can be dispersed by birds.
Potential to be spread by human activity: European bird cherry is commonly planted as an ornamental (Welsh 1974).
Germination requirement: Seeds require cold stratification for germination (USDA 2002).
Growth requirements: European bird cherry is suited to coarse and medium textured soils (no adaptation to fine soils), pH ranging from 5 to 7. It has low anaerobic and saline tolerance. It is calcareous tolerant. It withstands temperatures to -33°F, and requires 110 frost-free days for reproduction. European bird cherry is not drought and shade tolerant (USDA 2002).
Cogeneric weed: None.
Listing: Prunus padus is not listed as noxious in North America (Invader Database System 2003).

Distribution and Abundance
European bird cherry is commonly cultivated ornamental in southern Alaska (UAM 2003, Welsh 1974). It also occurs in Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware (USDA 2002



Distribution of European bird cherry in Alaska

Native and current distribution: European bird cherry is native to Europe, temperate Asia, and northern Africa. It is now introduced into North America.

Management
Control options have not been investigated.

References:

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