Propagation

Cultivate usually are propagated by seed, and plants grown from seed require five years or more to begin fruiting. Within any seedling population, a small percentage of plants will be substantially different from the parent plant. This is more of a problem with some of the seed-propagated cultivars - "Cardinal" autumn olive, for example - than with others.

Seeds of all three species generally need cold stratification before they will germinate. Goumi seeds need a one-to-two-month stratification period. As expected of any weedy plant, autumn olive seeds germinate readily. Usually they need a two- or three-month stratification period, but germination immediately upon sowing, for some clones, at least, has also been reported.

Russian olive seeds do not germinate so readily, often waiting until their second season. Germination is delayed by inhibitors in both the endocarp (the outer covering of the seed) and the seed coat. If the endocarp is nicked with a file, softened for between thirty and sixty minutes in concentrated sulfuric acid, or kept warm and moist for four weeks, about fifty percent of the seeds will germinate even without cold stratification. If the endocarps are cracked open and the seed coats peeled from the embryos, almost all the seeds germinate even without cold stratification. A six-day washing in water also leaches inhibitors and so speeds germination. Intact seeds require two to three months of cool, moist stratification before they will germinate.

All three species can be propagated clonally by stem cuttings taken mid- to late summer, or by root cuttings and layering when plants are dormant. Do not expect a high percentage of Russian olive seem cuttings to root. With goumi, include a small "heel" of old wood at the base of cuttings taken from the current season's growth.