

FALSE INDIGO

Amorpha fruticosa

Status in Maine: localized



Description: Multi-stemmed, suckering shrub, capable of reaching 12' tall and 15+' wide but usually not that tall in New England. **Leaves:** Alternate, ½-1½' long, pinnately compound, with 11-35 leaflets. Oval leaflets are 1-2" long and have pointed tips. **Flowers:** Small ($\frac{3}{8}$ "), tubular purple flowers with orange anthers are densely arranged in 4-8" terminal spikes. **Fruits:** Small, curved pods, $\sim\frac{1}{2}$ " long, each containing 1-2 seeds. Pods are covered with tiny resin glands and are sticky. **Stem:** New twigs are green and pubescent. Bark later becomes gray and smooth. **Roots:** Extensive, woody, branching system. Possesses nitrogen-fixing bacteria in nodules.

Native range: Much of North America, excluding New England and the Pacific Northwest. **How it spread:** In the horticultural trade since colonial times; more recently, has been planted for erosion control.

Reproduction. By both seed and vegetative means. Seed production and viability are high. Seeds spread by water, wildlife, and equipment. Plants stump sprout and spread laterally through root suckers, forming dense thickets. Can regenerate from stem fragments.



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Habitat: Aside from shade intolerance, it is very adaptable, tolerating flooding, drought, poor soils, and salt. Riverbanks, floodplains, tidal zones, and wet woodlands are common habitats in New England.

Similar native species: Can be confused with sumac shrubs (*Rhus* spp.), particularly at a distance. Sumac leaflets are longer and narrower, with toothed margins.

Similar non-native species: Saplings of both black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) and honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), although locust leaves lack pointed tips. Also, false spiraea (*Sorbaria sorbifolia*), which has narrower, pointed, toothed leaflets.

Control methods: Repeated cutting to prevent leaf and flower production will eventually exhaust plant reserves. Flame weeding is not recommended, as it can increase stem numbers. Herbicides are effective as foliar applications (glyphosate or triclopyr solution). Cut-stump application of glyphosate or triclopyr solution applied immediately after cutting is another option, after spring leaf-out. Follow-up will be required. ***Special rules apply to herbicide use in or near wetlands and waterbodies - see the section in the back of this guide titled "Use of Herbicides to Control Invasive Plants in or Near Wetlands and Waterbodies."***

