

Natural Area Preservation
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INVASIVE PLANTS

Buckthorn *Rhamnus spp.*

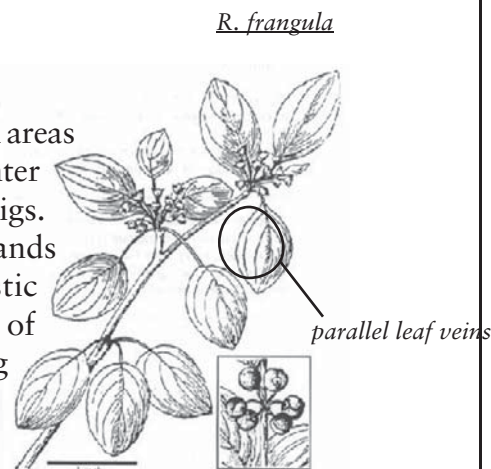
History

Buckthorn (*Rhamnus spp.*) was introduced to the Americas in the early 1800s as ornamental and privacy shrubbery and for “wildlife habitat”. Possessing the traits of a good shrub (hardiness, quick growth, and visually dense), they also quickly invaded our natural areas and are now posing one of the largest invasive problems our parks have seen. Buckthorn species do not have any natural predators (grazers, parasites, or diseases); are spread easily and long distances by birds who eat the berries, and on animal feet; have a longer growing season than our native shrubs, and have a high tolerance to low light conditions. All of these characteristics contribute to their rapid spread at the expense of native biodiversity.



How Can I Identify It?

Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) can be found in areas with well drained soils and may be identified in the winter season by the short thorn present on the end of the twigs. Glossy buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*) is found in wetlands and other areas with saturated soils. Its characteristic bark is smooth and gray with white speckles. Leaves of both species are oval to egg shaped with veins running almost parallel to the leaf margin. Glossy buckthorn’s leaves have a smooth leaf margin while common has a toothy margin with shade leaves being almost circular. Buckthorn flowers in May with dark colored berries ripening in the fall, frequently hanging on the trees well into the winter.



F A C T S H E E T

BUCKTHORN *Rhamnus spp.*

How Can Buckthorn Be Controlled?

- NAP's preferred method of control is cutting and applying herbicide directly to the cut stumps for large shrubs and trees.
- Prescribed burning is effective on seedling shrubs and repeated burns can kill younger shrubs as well.
- For more information on control methods visit The Nature Conservancy website at: <http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu>

What Can I Do?

- If you see a small infestation of seedling plants, pull them. When pulling be sure to remove the root to prevent resprouting from root fragments. Pulled plants should be left on a rock or log so the roots are not in contact with soil.
- Stay on, and keep pets on, established roads and trails to prevent invasive seed dispersal.
- After visiting an area that has buckthorn, or other invasives present, clean up before you leave the site! Make sure your clothes, shoes, vehicles and pets are mud and/or seed free.
- Use plants native to southeastern Michigan in upcoming landscaping projects. NAP has a series of brochures to assist you in choosing native shrubs and trees.
- Participate in NAP-sponsored volunteer workdays to remove buckthorn and other invasives from city natural areas.
- Learn to identify buckthorn and other invasive shrubs and trees. Invasive woody plants to look out for are:

Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica* and *R. frangula*)
tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)
autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*)
honeysuckle (*Lonicera spp.*)