

Rhamnus cathartica,
Common Buckthorn

Common Buckthorn comes from Europe and western Asia. Growth of this plant crowds out native vegetation, due to its dense growth. The plant can also influence the chemistry of a habitat by leaving a high concentration of nitrogen in the soil. In addition, the decomposition of the leaf litter changes soil nitrogen content and can increase the pH levels of the soil.

Description: Buckthorn is a large shrub that can grow up to six meters high. It has dark green, egg-shaped leaves that are typically lighter on the underside. These leaves have prominent leaf veins that curve as they approach the rounded tip. They are arranged alternately, but may appear close to opposite. The plant has small thorns at the tip of its branches.

Control: Continuous mowing/cutting has been seen to cut populations, but manual control of this plant is difficult. The seeds may persist for up to five years. Research into more biological controls are currently in progress.

Look-alikes: Common Buckthorn can be distinguished from other Buckthorns by the sharp, thorn tipped branches and noticeable forward curved side veins on its leaves. In addition, the clusters of purplish-black berries that ripen in August/September are distinctive.

Flower Time and Description: This plant flowers during the late spring (May-June). The flowers are small with four sepals and four petals, forming clusters from the axis of leaves or on short twigs along the stem.

