



## Invasive Species Fact Sheet

### Common Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) Glossy Buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*)

#### Introduction

Buckthorn is a relatively common shrub in Michigan growing on roadsides, along tree lines, and in wood lots. Common buckthorn is found in wooded areas as a thorny thicket along tree lines. Glossy buckthorn is used as an ornamental shrub for landscaping and is often seen for sale in nurseries. Both types of buckthorn were introduced in the United States from Eurasia. Buckthorn develops well under adverse growing conditions, and its berries are food for wildlife. For these reasons buckthorn has become a noxious weed; choking out native vegetation with its dense vegetation.



Glossy Buckthorn. Robert H. Mohlenbrock. USDA SCS. 1989. *Midwest wetland flora: Field office illustrated guide to plant species*. Midwest National Technical Center, Lincoln. Courtesy of USDA NRCS Wetland Science Institute

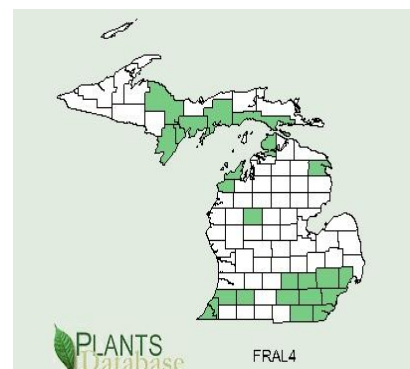
#### Identification

Common buckthorn is shrub that can grow to 22 feet in height and a trunk up to 10 inches in diameter. The bark is grey to brown and rough textured when mature. The inner bark is yellow and the heartwood is pink to orange. Twigs are often tipped with a spine, replacing terminal buds. Dense clusters of yellow-green flowers, which form in spring, produce fruit. The fruit that is found only on female trees is green in early season and turns black in the fall and contains 3 or 4 seeds. Leaves are broad and oval with 3-4 pairs of up curved veins, dark green and glossy. Leaves often stay on the tree well into fall, after most deciduous trees have dropped their leaves.

Glossy buckthorn does not have a spine at the twig tips. The leaves are toothed, and the undersides are hairy.

#### Distribution

Buckthorn is an understory tree that commonly invades open oak woods, woodlot edges, and deadfall openings. It is tolerant of many soil types and sunlight conditions. It is particularly aggressive in wet areas. The berries produced are a food source for birds, which are the catalyst for distribution and expansion of buckthorn.



### Control/Removal

#### Mechanical

Anything plants less than 3/8 of an inch in diameter can be removed by hand, be sure to remove as much of the root as possible. Plants 3/8 inch- 2 inches in diameter can be pulled with a hand tool that removes the roots known as a “Weed Wrench” or “Root Talon.” Any pulling should be done when the soil is damp. Buckthorn plants can be left to decompose, and provide good shelter for wildlife when stacked. The plant can be chipped if there is no fruit on it. If fruit is present, burning the branches is recommended to reduce the viable seed bank.

#### Herbicide

Plant diameters above 2 inches need to be cut down with hand tools or a chainsaw, or girdled, and then treated with an herbicide. The best time to treat buckthorn is late summer and through the fall. Buckthorn leaves remain green longer than most plants, making it easy to identify. General use herbicides such as glyphosate or triclopyr work well in non - aquatic habitats. Using the cut stump or girdling method reduces negative effects to native vegetation around the treated area, and reduces the amount of herbicide wasted, making it less costly.

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