

BUCKTHORN:

What You Should Know. What You Can Do.



Jay Rendall, MnDNR

Buckthorn leafs out early and retains its leaves late into the fall, creating dense shade that helps it to out-compete many native plants.

What happens when buckthorn has been planted as an ornamental shrub, hedgerow, shelterbelt, or tree in your backyard?

An impenetrable, messy thicket grows that:

- Out-competes native plants for nutrients, light, and moisture.
- Degrades wildlife habitat.
- Threatens the future of forests, wetlands, prairies, and other natural habitats.
- Contributes to erosion by shading out other plants that grow on the forest floor.
- Serves as host to other pests, such as crown rust fungus and soybean aphid.
- Forms an impenetrable layer of vegetation.
- Creates messy fruits that stain sidewalks and driveways.
- Lacks “natural controls” such as insects or disease that would curb its growth.



A LITTLE HISTORY

Common, or European buckthorn, and glossy buckthorn are the two non-native invasive buckthorn species found in Minnesota. Common buckthorn was first brought here from Europe in the mid-1800s as a popular hedging material. It escaped and became a nuisance plant, forming dense thickets in forests, yards, parks, and roadsides. It crowded out native plants and displaced the native shrubs and small trees in the mid-layer of the forest where many species of birds nested. Today, common buckthorn is found in nearly every Minnesota county, even though the sale, transport, and movement of these plants is prohibited.

Glossy buckthorn, also from Europe, has been sold by the nursery trade in two different forms. The cultivar *Frangula alnus* ‘*Columnaris*’ is narrow and tall; the cultivar *Frangula alnus* ‘*Asplenifolia*’ spreads up to 10 feet and has narrow leaves that give it a fern-like texture.



Glossy buckthorn

Deborah Rose, MnDNR

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has declared common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) and glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) as restricted noxious weeds. This means that the sale, transport, or movement of these plants is prohibited statewide.

