

Common Buckthorn



Found in oak forests, savannahs, prairies, roadsides, and untended pastures. Performs best on well drained soils. Has a longer growing season than native trees and shades out understory growth. Allelopathic. Up to 20-25' tall, often with several stems arising from the base, and spreading crown. Plants are either male or female.

Leaves

Ovate or elliptic, with prominent veins curving toward tip. Mostly opposite leaves, 1-2.5" long, with tiny teeth. Leaves remain on plants and stay green into fall.

Stems & Bark

Gray to brown bark with prominent light-colored lenticils. Cut bark exposes yellow sapwood and orange heartwood. Twigs often end in stout thorns.



Flowers

Inconspicuous, small and clustered in leaf axils. Fragrant, greenish-yellow, 4-petaled flowers that bloom in spring.

Fruits & seeds

Abundant clusters of round, black, pea-sized fruit. Ripen on female plants in late summer. Dispersed by birds and mammals. Fruits remain on plants into winter after all the leaves have fallen.

Roots

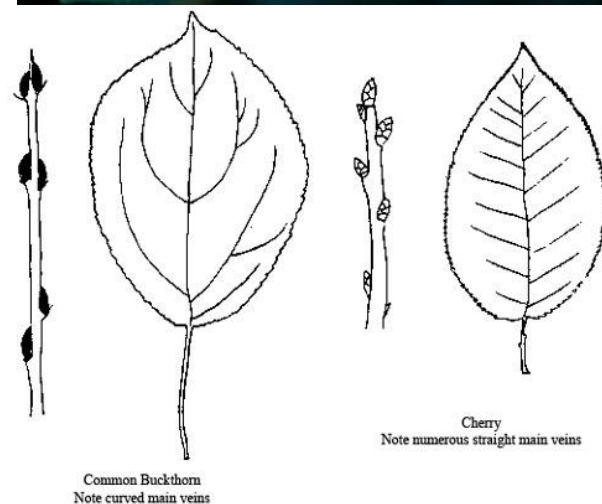
Extensive, black fibrous root system.

Similar Plants

Black Cherry. Similarities between mature buckthorn bark and mature cherry bark. Leaves are much longer and skinnier than buckthorn leaves, and lack prominent veins.

Glossy buckthorn. An invasive that is similar to common buckthorn. Leaves are mostly opposite, with greater number of veins. Upper surface of leaves are shiny with undersides dull.

Lance-leaved buckthorn. A native that is less than 6' tall, found in wet areas and on dry limestone slopes, and has alternate leaves, 2-



Common Buckthorn
Note curved main veins

Cherry
Note numerous straight main veins

6" long, gradually tapering to a point at the tip.

Common Buckthorn



Glossy Buckthorn



An invasive found mostly in low, wetland sites but can also adapt to drier uplands. Forms dense thickets that shade out other plants. Grows up to 20' tall, often with several stems arising from the base, and spreading crown. Gray to brown bark with prominent light-colored lenticels. Cut bark or branch exposes yellow-orange inner bark.

Leaves

Ovate or elliptic, with prominent veins that come straight out from midrib and curve slightly towards tip. Mostly alternate leaves, 2-3" long, with glossy upper surface and dull underside that may be hairy. Leaf margins are untoothed. Leaves stay green into fall.

Stems & Bark

Stems are greenish, often with tiny, soft fine hairs. The bark on older branches is blotchy grayish-brown with prominent light raised areas. The sapwood, just below the outer bark, is yellow and the heartwood is pinkish orange.

Flowers

Flowers are tiny with five greenish-white petals, arranged in clusters at the bases of leaves. Bloom from May through September.

Fruits & seeds

Abundant clusters of round, pea-sized fruit. Fruit ripens progressively from red to dark purple in late summer. Dispersed by birds and mammals. Fruits can remain on plants after all leaves have fallen.



Similar species

Chokecherry. Edges are finely serrated with sharp teeth.

Common Buckthorn. Also an invasive. Common buckthorn has 4 petals rather than 5. It has a small thorn at the tip of its branches. It has 3-5 leaf veins rather than 8 or 9 of glossy buckthorn.

Dogwoods. Have opposite leaves rather than alternate and their fruit and flowers are arranged in clusters on reddish stems.

Lance-leaved buckthorn. is less than 6' tall, found in wet areas and on dry limestone slopes, and has alternate leaves, 2-6" long, gradually tapering to a point at the tip.

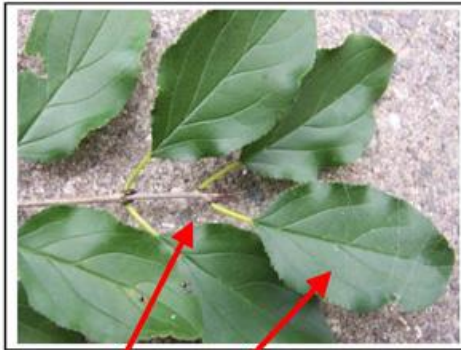


Glossy Buckthorn



Common Buckthorn
(most common)

Glossy Buckthorn
(wet areas)



Glossy leaves with deep, prominent leaf veins. Leaf edged with small teeth

Leaves almost directly across from each other, thorn at tip of twig

Similar to Common Buckthorn, leaves extremely glossy with deep veins and leaf margin is smooth, without teeth



Rhamnus cathartica
common buckthorn



Prunus serotina
black cherry



Frangula alnus
glossy buckthorn