

Rhamnus cathartica

Invasive to Maine

Common Buckthorn
Carolina Buckthorn

Upland
Forests and Forest Edges













Leaves



esagor, flickr.com



Look for oval leaves 3 to 15 cm long with finely-toothed edges. The leaves are opposite on the stem. Pairs of prominent veins curve toward the tips of the leaves.

LEAF ARRANGEMENT	LEAF TYPE	LEAF/LEAFLET SHAPE	LEAF/LEAFLET EDGE
 ALTERNATE	 SIMPLE	 PALMATE	 SMOOTH
 OPPOSITE	 COMPOUND-PALMATE	 OVAL	 TOOTHED
 WHORLED	 COMPOUND-PINNATE	 ROUND	 WAVY

Plant



City of Andover, MN



Look for a shrub to small tree growing 1 to 10 m tall. Common buckthorn grows quickly and can form dense thickets.

Stem



Leslie J. Mehrhoff



Look for bark that is smooth, coppery-brown, and speckled. Twigs are gray with raised bumps and often have a sharp thorn at the tip.

Seasonal Change



Leslie J. Mehrhoff



In fall, look for small, dark blue to black berries. In the spring, look for flowers that are fragrant, bell-shaped, and greenish-yellow.

Similar Species

Common buckthorn is similar to another invasive species, glossy buckthorn, which has glossier leaves with smooth edges. Unlike the invasive buckthorns, native alder-leaved buckthorn does NOT have thorns at the end of twigs.

Did You Know?

The fruit was once used as a medicinal cleansing agent, but is no longer used due to potentially dangerous side-effects. Buckthorn seeds can remain viable in the soil for up to 5 years.