

Glossy buckthorn

Frangula alnus

Description

Rapidly forms dense thickets, crown spreads laterally; resprouts vigorously; had been widely recommended for conservation planting until invasive qualities became apparent.

Habit

Deciduous shrub or small tree growing up to 6 m (20 ft) tall; multiple stems at the base; crown spreading; trunk up to 10 inches in diameter.

Leaves

Simple, alternate, oblong, 2.5-6 cm (1-2.5 in) long; untoothed or crenulate margins; dark green; shiny; smooth or slightly hairy below; veins turn toward tip near leaf margins; leaves present from mid-May to November.

Stems

Brown-green in color, hairy, prominent lenticels, chunky bark, terminal buds rust colored, bark gray or brown in color, sapwood yellow, heartwood pinkish to orange.



Photo: John M. Randall, TNC



Photo: Leslie J. Mehrhoff, IPANE



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Photo: Elizabeth Czarapata



Photo: Leslie J. Mehrhoff, IPANE



Flowers

Small, greenish yellow; four petals; clusters of 2-6; bisexual; blooms late May through September.

Fruits and Seeds

Round, pea-sized, drupes of 3-4 seeds, red, ripening to black/dark purple in July through September; abundant; remain viable in the soil for 2 to 3 years.

Habitat

Sun and shade tolerant; occurs in a variety of soil and moisture conditions, from wet to very dry; found in pastures, fence rows, roadsides, wetlands, and woodland edges.

Reproduction

Primarily sexual; plants mature quickly; at any given time there can be flowers, partially ripened fruit (red) and fully ripened fruit (black) on the same plant.

Similar

Alder buckthorn (*Rhamnus alnifolia*) is less than 1 m (3 ft) tall, hairless twigs; Lance-leaved buckthorn (*Rhamnus lanceolata*) is less than 2 m (6 ft) tall, leaves up to 15 cm (6 in) long, tapering.

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Monitor woodland and wetland edges, and paths; buckthorn leafs out early and retains its leaves late into fall. Begin control efforts in highest quality areas; hand pull seedlings or burn with propane torch where densities are high; target large, fruit-bearing plants for control/removal; treat cut stumps with herbicide; basal bark treatment is also effective. Where fuel is present, prescribed fire may provide effective control of seedlings in fire adapted communities. This species is difficult to control, research control options thoroughly.



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