
Common or Glossy Buckthorn

Rhamnus cathartica, *Frangula alnus*



This large shrub or small tree with crooked branches, 6–25' high, which grows in dense thickets, is still rare in Harpswell. This is our chance to prevent its invasion. It leafs out early and stays green late in the season, giving it a competitive advantage as it shades out and robs native plants of nutrients.

- Bark is dark gray; inner bark is orange, twigs are gray to brown and spine-tipped on Common Buckthorn (*R. cathartica*).
 - Flowers in spring are four-petaled on Common, 5-petaled on Glossy, yellow/green in clusters at base of leaf stalks.
 - Leaves are dull green on Common, shiny on Glossy, 1"–2" long; slightly staggered on the stems, oval with several pairs of distinct veins curving toward a pointed tip. Leaves turn yellow-green in fall and remain on plant late, then drop.
 - Fruit is berry-like, ¼", purple-black in autumn.
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HOW TO CONTROL:

- Pull or dig small plants any time soil is wet. Tamp soil afterward. Roots will re-sprout. Monitor and repeat.
- For large Glossy Buckthorn, cutting a 1" girdle through the bark will prevent re-sprouting.
- Cutting, then five-second flame torching, kills stems less than 2" in diameter.
- Cut in late summer, and if beyond 25' from water, paint cut stems with 25-50% glyphosate or triclopyr. Cutting without herbicide treatment will stimulate re-sprouting.
- Repeat, or spray leaf re-sprouts with 2-5% glyphosate. Spraying leaf re-sprouts does not always work.

Sources

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<https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/2505e/>;

<https://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/invasive-species/CommonBuckthornBCP.pdf>

Controls

<https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/2505e/>;

Casco Bay Invasive Species Network, Winning the War on Weeds;

<https://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/invasive-species/CommonBuckthornBCP.pdf>
