

**Buckthorn (*Rhamnus spp.*)**

**Species names:**

Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) and Dahurian buckthorn (*Rhamnus davurica*)

NOTE: species may hybridize

**Family name:** Buckthorn (Rhamnaceae)

**Habitat:**

- Forest, open forest, meadow, roadside, landscaping

**Commercial Availability:** Yes

**Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)**

**Also called:** European buckthorn

**Native range:** Europe

**NJ Status:** Emerging Stage 2- Uncommon (may be regionally common). It is *highly threatening* to natural plant communities. All detected occurrences should be eradicated.

**General description:**

- Small deciduous tree/shrub, to 20'
- Smooth branches, often end in spines
- Especially aggressive in wet soils



Branches often end in spines.

**Leaves:**

- Slightly off-opposite leaves
- Finely toothed, oval/elliptical, hairless
- Shiny and dark green above-- may stand out from other vegetation
- Leaves remain green late into the fall, after most other species have dropped
- 3-4 distinct up-curved leaf veins

Leaves are almost opposite, but not quite



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**Flowers:**

- Bloom May-June as leaves appear
- Small, yellow-green, grow near leaf axils
- Blooms in clusters of 2-6

**Fruit:**

- August- September
- Round, dark purple/black berry in leaf axils (0.25")
- Tree appears heavy with berries



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**Dahurian buckthorn (*Rhamnus davurica*)**

**Native range:** Asia

**NJ Status:** Emerging State 0- Absent or rare. It is *highly threatening* to natural plant communities. All detected occurrences should be eradicated.

**General description:**

- Deciduous tree, to 30'
- Spines on twigs and branches



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4-6 veins on each leaf

**Leaves:**

- Slightly off-opposite leaves
- Finely toothed, oval/elliptical, hairless
- 4-6 distinct up-curved leaf veins

**Flowers:**

- Blooms May-June in clusters of 1-3
- Numerous, small, yellow-green



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**Fruit:**

- July-October
- Copious round, dark purple/black berry in leaf axils (0.25")

**Look-alikes:**

**Dogwood (*Cornus sp.*)**

- Native understory tree
- Similar leaf veining pattern
- Opposite leaves without serrated edge
- Red berries
- Showy white flowers with 4 petals
- Dogwoods lack spines on their bark and twigs



Dogwood leaves have up-curved veins with smooth leaf edges

**Glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*)**

- Invasive tree
- No spine
- May also appear sub-opposite
- Untoothed leaves, hairy beneath
- Note: See NJISST fact sheet for more on this plant



Glossy buckthorn

Robert H. Mohlenbrock

**Alder buckthorn (*R. alnifolia*)**

- Native shrub, max 3'
- Leaves with 6-7 pairs of veins



**Blackhaw (*Viburnum prunifolium*)**

- Native shrub/small tree
- Opposite, finely toothed leaves with up-curved veins
- Leaf stem often has reddish tinge
- Blue berries occur in clusters
- Showy white flowers



Blackhaw berries occur in clusters with reddish stems



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