

# Weed Information Sheet:

## glossy buckthorn

*Frangula alnus*

### Identification:

**Rhamnaceae (Buckthorn family)**

Perennial shrub, deciduous Height: 10-25' Width:

Leaf Arrangement: alternate

Flower: Cream

Blooms: Late spring to Early

Fruit:

Fall Color:

This large, multi-stemmed shrub typically invades wetlands and wetland edges, but can occasionally be found in upland woodlands. The upper surfaces of the leaves are indeed glossy, with smooth, untoothed margins. The leaf veins have a distinctive 'fishbone' pattern. On the underside of the leaves the veins are strongly embossed, with the central vein being particularly prominent. Young twigs and buds are slightly fuzzy. Mature twigs and branches will have distinctive light-colored lenticels which gives them a speckled appearance. The berries first develop a red color but are black at maturity. Since each berry ripens at a different rate, you will often find both red and black berries on the same branch. Fall color is dull and variable, from green to yellow to reddish-orange. There are cultivars that have a more narrow, upright form.

Glossy buckthorn looks only superficially similar to its similarly invasive cousin common buckthorn. For example, glossy buckthorn has no thorns. However, its leaves do look very similar to the native black chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*), which share the same 'fishbone' venation. Black chokeberry has leaves with finely-toothed margins, young twigs which are smooth and typically red, and the black berries hang down from the branch in distinctive clusters.



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*Frangula alnus*

**AKA: Rhamnus frangula**

**-3 NR-40 Restricted**

## **Description & Impact:**

Though not as aggressive as its cousin common buckthorn, this species can spread to form extremely dense thickets in wetlands and wetland edges. The dense shade they create kills-off native plants which has a cascade of negative impacts. The loss of these native plants means fewer pollinators. It also reduces food for songbirds and other wildlife in the form of the many insect species that would have been feeding on those lost native plants. Underneath an established stand of buckthorn there is only bare soil which is easily eroded, degrading the water quality of nearby wetlands and water bodies by salutation. And not to mention, these dense glossy buckthorn thickets are very difficult to travel through.

## **Control Methods:**

**Organic:** A new technique to control invasive shrubs is called critical period cutting. This involves cutting the plants multiple times, with the first cut being at roughly chest-height. This Initial cutting should be done in late-May when the buckthorn have fully leafed-out and the plant's energy reserves are at their lowest. With this initial cut, also remove lower branches that contain leaves. Follow-up in mid-September by stripping the newly sprouting branches either by hand or with hand pruners or a small electric saw. If necessary, repeat this stripping again after leaf-out in the spring and again in early-fall.

I do not recommend pulling glossy buckthorn, as this will cause excessive soil disturbance and potentially siltation of nearby water bodies. Regular prescribed fire will prevent the establishment of this species and help control seedlings.

**Chemical:** The most effective control method is to cut each stem close to the ground and treat the stump with

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concentrated herbicide at the rate recommended on the product label. An aquatic-approved formulation of glyphosate (Rodeo®, AquaNeat® etc.) is effective. An amine formulation of triclopyr (Vastlan®, Garlon® 3A), may be more effective, but is more effective. It is best to apply the herbicide to the cut stumps immediately after cutting so as not to lose track of them. Basal bark treatment with and ester formulation triclopyr in oil is also effective, but this method cannot be used near wetlands. Always read herbicide labels carefully before use and always apply according to the instruction on the product label.

Citations: <https://fmr.org/updates/conservation/how-and-when-use-critical-period-cutting-method-remove-invasive-buckthorn>

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