

What is Buckthorn?



Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), also known as European waythorn, European buckthorn and Hart's thorn, is a shrub or small tree that grows up to 22 feet in height. It is considered an **invasive** species in most areas of the United States and southeastern Canada due to its tendency to form dense thickets that crowd out native

Buckthorn Can Destroy a Forest

Buckthorn can be a real danger to the forest and can also inhabit the backyard. It moves in undetected as a small plant, growing quickly. Its thick thorny branches block out the sun while its root system emits chemicals that kill native species. Buckthorn is one of the first plants to blossom in the summer and one of the last to go dormant in the fall, making it hard for other plants to survive, much less thrive. If you have buckthorn, there are some fairly quick steps you can take to remove the scourge and keep it under control.

Catching It Early

Buckthorn starts out, like most other plants, fairly inconspicuously. The small tender shoots pop up green and innocent. It's best to catch buckthorn at this time, before it has a chance to grow, emit chemicals and generate its large thorns. Buckthorn is green and, much like other trees, grows where there are seed-producing buckthorn plants.

Medium-Sized Growth

You can cut down buckthorn, but it's best to catch it early to make the process easier and reduce the safety risk. Hardware stores sell a root puller that works best on trees that are 1 to 2 inches in circumference. But the root puller is fairly expensive, and a common pick ax is nearly as effective. Buckthorn has a root structure that looks like a hockey stick, with one main root running out. To remove trees that are 1 to 2 inches in circumference, simply dig out the dirt to the main root, chop off the main root with the pick ax, and then push the tree over toward the root. For smaller stocks, you can use a brush cutter. Just make sure that you wear gloves when working, even with less than mature buckthorn, as the spines and sharp branches can give you a cut.

Large Buckthorn Trees

Buckthorn grows fast, and once it's established, it will make life difficult for every other plant in your woods or backyard. Buckthorn, like other trees, can be taken down with a chain saw but there are some things you need to remember when cutting them down. Wear long-sleeved clothes, an acrylic face protector and thick leather gloves when removing large trees, as the plant has many branches, and the large spines, or thorns, can cause serious injury and deep cuts.

Bottom Line: If you have it in your yard, **GET RID of IT!! That is Why the Men's Club is working to get it off the Golf Course.**