

## Common Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)

### Description

Common buckthorn is a shrub or small tree that can grow to 7 m in height and have a trunk up to 25 cm wide. The bark is gray to brown and rough textured when mature. When cut, the inner bark is yellow and the heartwood, pink to orange. Twigs are often tipped with a spine. In spring, dense clusters of 2 to 6, yellow-green, 4-petaled flowers emerge from stems near the bases of leaf stalks. Male and female flowers are borne on separate plants. Has small black fruits about 0.6 cm across. Leaves are broadly oval, rounded or pointed at the tip, with 3-4 pairs of veins, and have jagged, toothed margins. Leaves appear dark, glossy green on the upper surface and stay green late into fall, after most other deciduous leaves have fallen.

### Key Identifiers

- ✓ Shrub/Tree
- ✓ Roundish, deeply veined leaves; 3-4 veins curve to the leaf tip
- ✓ Thorns at end of stems.
- ✓ Black berries

### Location in Canada

Common buckthorn has become naturalized from Nova Scotia to Saskatchewan. Sporadic trees can be found in Alberta.

### Resources

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/rhca1.htm>

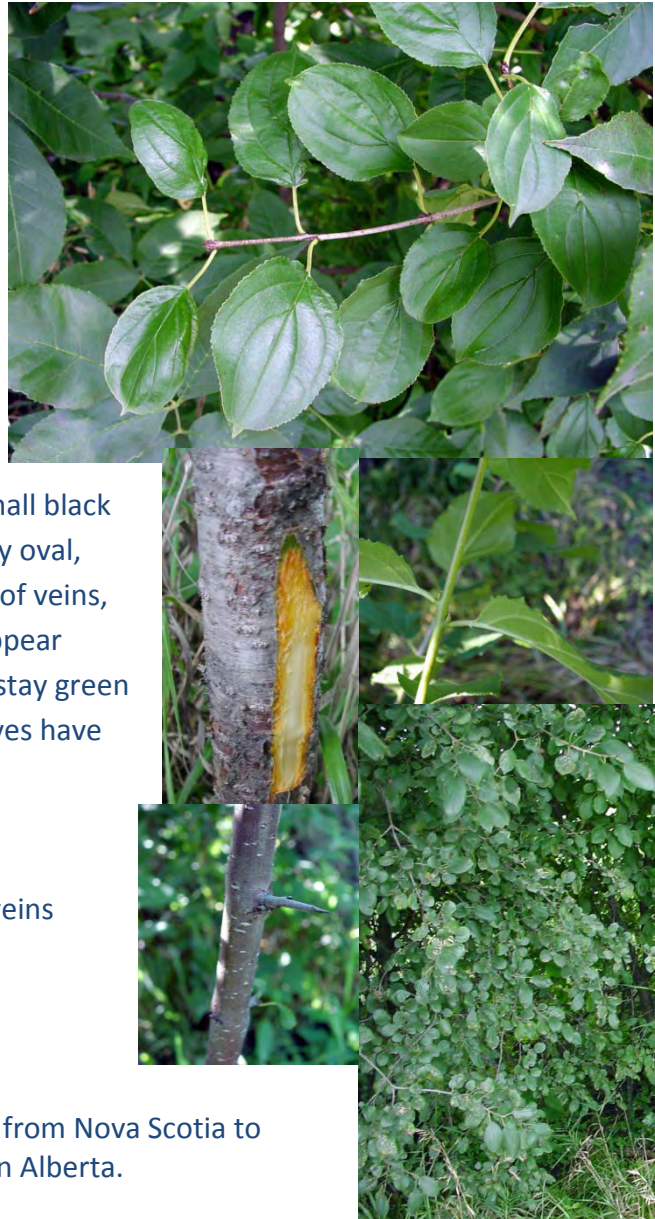
<http://ontariotrees.com/main/species.php?id=2022>

[http://wiki.bugwood.org/Rhamnus\\_cathartica#Range:](http://wiki.bugwood.org/Rhamnus_cathartica#Range:)

### Similar species

Alder-leaved Buckthorn (*Rhamnus alnifolia*) - a low-growing shrub that may grow to a maximum of 3 feet in height, and has leaves with 6-7 pairs of veins.

Glossy Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) - does not have a spine at twig tips, leaves are not toothed, and the undersides of the leaves are hairy.



Chris Evans, River to River  
CWMA, bugwood.org (all photos)