

**Common Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)**

**Also called:** European buckthorn

**Family name:** Buckthorn (Rhamnaceae)

**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

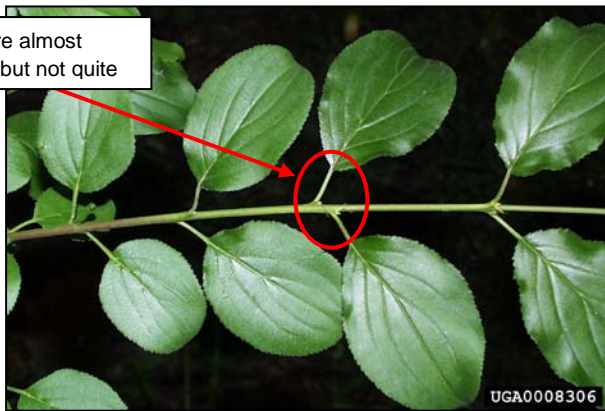


Branches often end in spines.

**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 lateral veins strongly upcurved toward leaf tip.

Leaves are almost opposite, but not quite



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**Flowers:**

- Small, yellow-green, grow near leaf axils
- Bloom May-June as leaves appear

**Fruit:**

- Round, dark purple/black berry in leaf axils
- Ripens in August- September
- Tree appears heavy with berries



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**Habitat:**

- Forest, open forest, meadow, roadside, landscaping
- Especially aggressive in wet soils

**Commercial Availability:** Yes

**Look-alikes:**

**Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*)**

- Native understory tree
- Similar leaf venation
- Opposite leaves without teeth
- Red berries, showy white flowers with 4 petals

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

- Invasive tree
- No spine
- Untoothed leaves, hairy beneath

Glossy buckthorn



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**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 upcurved veins
- Blue berries occur in clusters
- Showy white flowers



Blackhaw berries occur in clusters with reddish stems