

# Glossy Buckthorn

(*Frangula alnus*)



## Key ID Features

**Arrangement:** alternate

**Leaves:** smooth edge, oval, dark green, straight parallel veins

**Flowers:** small pale yellow flowers, 5 petals

**Fruit:** red berries that turn purplish-black

**Stem:** thin smooth bark with white lenticels, no thorns

**Root:** dark red or purple in color

**Growth Habit:** large shrub/small tree growing up to 25 ft. tall



## The Impact

Glossy Buckthorn (also called “False Buckthorn”) was introduced to the United States in the mid-1800s as an ornamental plant. It grows aggressively, can shade out competition, and the seeds remain viable in the soil for 2+ years. The seeds can be dispersed by water (able to float), but also have a laxative property which causes the birds and animals that eat them to rapidly digest and disperse the seeds; this both spreads the plant and limits the animals’ ability to absorb nutrients. Glossy Buckthorn can increase the nitrogen content in the soil, which has negative impacts on native species. Glossy Buckthorn limits the herbaceous layer by altering the microclimate near the ground, consequentially reducing habitat and food sources for wildlife.

## Quick Facts

**Plant Family:** Rhamnaceae

**Origin:** Eurasia, North Africa

**Habitat:** disturbed areas, forest edges, forest understory, meadows and fields, swamps

**Present in Vermont?:** yes

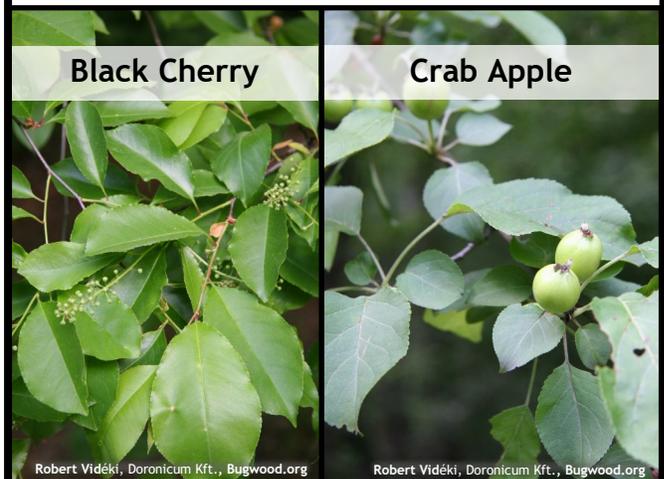
**Method of Spread:** primarily by seeds dispersed via wildlife and water (seeds can float)

**Status:** Class B Noxious Weed\*  
<http://bit.ly/VTPlantQuarantine>

*\*The Vermont Noxious Weed Quarantine listing means it is illegal to buy, sell, or transport this species in Vermont*



## Common Look-alikes



### Distinguishing features

**Leaf:** less distinct veins

### Distinguishing features

**Fruit:** large fleshy fruit

## Native Plant Alternatives



**Common Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*):** food source for birds and small mammals, grows in a variety of soils, used in hedgerows, useful for erosion control



**Silky Dogwood (*Cornus amomum*):** purple berries are a food source for songbirds and mammals, grows in moist sites and along stream edges

## Control Information

To learn more about identification & control options, check out the Gallery of Land Invasives on **VTinvasives.org** and these additional resources:

<https://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/invasive-species/GlossyBuckthornBCP.pdf>

References: [EDDMaps Ontario - Species - Glossy Buckthorn](#), [Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - Glossy Buckthorn](#), [University of Maine Extension: Common Buckthorn vs Glossy Buckthorn](#)

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