

## Common buckthorn

Common names: Hart's thorn, European buckthorn  
(*Rhamnus cathartica*)

Currently in Montana, noxious weed infest about 8.2 million acres. Many of these state listed noxious weeds were brought to America as ornamentals for gardens, medicinal purposes, by accident in discarded soil from a ship's ballast, or unintentionally in bags of seed brought from other parts of the world. Whatever the cause of introduction non-native plant species have found their way onto Montana's state listed noxious weed list.

Common buckthorn is native to western Asia and Europe. It was introduced into the United States as an ornamental shrub in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is common in isolated areas in Montana. The seeds and leaves of this plant are mildly poisonous for people and animals, especially livestock including horses and cattle.

The leaves of common buckthorn are glossy, dark green, egg-shaped with pointed tips, and have tiny teeth on the edges. The leaves are arranged opposite to alternate on the branches and stay green late into the fall. One of the key features that distinguishes this plant from chokecherry are the 3-5 leaf veins that curve toward the tip of the leaf. The bark of common buckthorn is brown or gray on the outer bark and orange to yellow on the inner bark; its twigs are often tipped with small thorns. Common buckthorn can grow up to 20-25' tall and typically forms dense thickets. It can grow in both disturbed and undisturbed habitats including roadsides, oil fields, prairies and a variety of woodlands, particularly along streams and rivers. This plant is only common in isolated areas in Montana.

The flowers of common buckthorn are yellowish-green with four petals. Once pollinated, flowers produce clusters of round, shiny, berry-like fruits that contain four seeds. These berries ripen from green to red to purple/black. Fruits are eaten by birds and seeds are distributed in droppings.

Common buckthorn can be controlled by hand pulling seedlings and small plants, cutting and trimming larger diameter plants and treating the stump with herbicide.

Please take a few moments to learn about noxious weeds. If noxious weeds are not currently a problem in your area, they may be in the near future. For more information about Montana's state listed noxious weeds, regulated plants, or weed species listed on your county weed list, please contact your local county weed district (can list weed district name here... ex: Lewis & Clark County Weed District) at \_(406)\_(Phone number)\_. Or you can contact the Montana Department of Agriculture at (406) 444-5600.