

EUROPEAN BUCKTHORN

Tier 2



Overview

European buckthorn is a deciduous shrub or small tree. It begins flowering late spring/early summer and flowers can appear with leaf-out. Fruits turn from green to red and to black when ripe by late summer/early fall.

European Buckthorn can lead to significant yield losses and lowered grades of cereal by being an alternate host for a fungus that causes oat rust. It is often confused with Chokecherry.

Habitat

Common in fence rows, pastures, roadsides, woodland and abandoned areas. It can also be seen infesting natural areas and invading river bottom and upland forest habitat.

Identification

Stems: Grows 1-4 m tall in shrub form with many stems and branches. In tree form, a single main stem with ascending branches growing to 5-8 m tall. Most branches are tipped with a thorn 0.5-2.2 cm long. Young bark is smooth with lighter-colored lenticels and older bark is grey and scaly. Branches have prominent leaf scars and terminal buds are hairy in winter.

Leaves: Dark green with slightly serrated edges, elliptic to ovate, 3.5 - 7.5 cm. They grow in pairs, but not exactly opposite.

Flowers: Small, greenish to yellowish, short-stalked, and in small clusters.

Fruits: Can be single or in clusters, borne in leaf axils or at the end of spur branches. Fruits are 5-10 mm in diameter bearing 1-4 seeds. Seeds are 4-5 mm long.

