

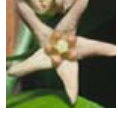


Invasive Plant Atlas of New England

Catalog of Species Search Results

Frangula alnus

(Glossy buckthorn
European alder buckthorn)



[:: Catalog of Species Search](#)



[Common Name\(s\)](#) | [Full Scientific Name](#) | [Family Name Common](#) | [Family Scientific Name](#) | [Images](#) | [Synonyms](#) | [Description](#) | [Similar Species](#) | [Reproductive/Dispersal Mechanisms](#) | [Distribution](#) | [History of Introduction in New England](#) | [Habitats in New England](#) | [Threats](#) | [Early Warning Notes](#) | [Management Links](#) | [Documentation Needs](#) | [Additional Information](#) | [References](#) | [Data Retrieval](#) | [Maps of New England Plant Distribution](#)

COMMON NAME

Glossy buckthorn
European alder buckthorn

FULL SCIENTIFIC NAME

Frangula alnus Mill.

FAMILY NAME COMMON

Buckthorn family

FAMILY SCIENTIFIC NAME

Rhamnaceae

IMAGES



Close-up of
flowers and
fruits



Close-up of
pinnately veined
leaves



Fruit



Flowers



Habit



Incursion



Habitat



Roots

NOMENCLATURE/SYNONYMS

Synonyms: *Rhamnus frangula* L.

DESCRIPTION

Botanical Glossary

Frangula alnus is a deciduous small tree or coarse shrub that grows up to 6 m (19.7 ft.) tall. It is often confused with *Rhamnus cathartica* (see similar species below). The young branchlets are pubescent. The short oblong to obovate leaves are 3-7 cm (1-2.5 in.) long and are arranged alternately. They are dark green (in the summer) and shining above, and glabrous or slightly pubescent beneath. The leaves turn greenish-yellow to yellow in the fall, and remain on the plant when most other species have already lost their leaves.

The yellow-green flowers of *Frangula alnus* are bisexual and 5-merous, and arranged in 1-8 flowered sessile, glabrous umbels. This plant flowers after the leaves expand, from May to September. The fruit are globose drupes, changing from red to black, and are 0.6 cm (0.25 in.) across. They ripen from July to August. It is important to note that at any given time there can be flowers, partially ripened fruits (red) and fully ripened fruits (black) present on the same plant.

Page References Bailey 645, Crow & Hellquist 243, Gleason & Cronquist 341, Holmgren 321, Magee & Ahles 724. See reference section below for full citations.

SIMILAR SPECIES

Rhamnus cathartica L. (Common buckthorn)

Character	<i>Frangula alnus</i>	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>
Leaf arrangement	Alternate	Opposite to subopposite

Ends of branches	Spine absent	Spine often present
Leaf venation	Pinnate	Lateral veins strongly upcurved

REPRODUCTIVE/DISPERSAL MECHANISMS

The fruit of *Frangula alnus* are most often dispersed by birds.

DISTRIBUTION

Frangula alnus is native to Europe, North Africa and Central Asia. In the United States, this plant is present from Maine south to Pennsylvania and New Jersey, west to Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, North and South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin. It is present in all New England states.

HISTORY OF INTRODUCTION IN NEW ENGLAND

Like *Rhamnus cathartica*, this plant was introduced to the United States before 1800 and started to invade native habitats probably around the early 1900s. In Gray's Manual of Botany (8th edition), the plant is described as "recently and rapidly spreading; likely to become obnoxious."

HABITATS IN NEW ENGLAND

Abandoned Field
 Early Successional Forest
 Edge
 Floodplain Forest
 Forest Wetland
 Pasture
 Planted Forest
 Roadside
 Shrub Wetland
 Vacant Lot
 Wet Meadow
 Yard or Garden

This plant tolerates more moisture and requires more light than *R. cathartica*, and can be found in swamps, fens and the edges of bogs. It also can be present in upland habitats such as woodland edges, fencerows and old fields.

THREATS

Frangula alnus is a great threat to wetlands, where it can form dense stands that cause the growth of other species to be

suppressed. It is readily dispersed by birds, and the extended productivity of the fruits allows it to be dispersed throughout the summer and fall. It is also an alternative host to crown rust fungi that infects oats.

MANAGEMENT LINKS

[The Nature Conservancy](#)

[Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group \(CIPWG\)](#)

[Illinois Nature Preserves Commission](#)

[Illinois Natural History Survey](#)

General description and management guidelines

DOCUMENTATION NEEDS

Documentation required: Specific photograph or snippet of the branch with flowers or fruits and the leaves.

Best time for documentation: Summer, fall.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Integrated Taxonomic Information System](#)

Taxonomic information about the species

[PLANTS Database](#)

Shows distribution information as well as having additional links.

[The Nature Conservancy](#)

Extensive description and control information

[Maine Invasive Plants, University of Maine](#)

General information and photographs

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DATA RETRIEVAL

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MAPS OF PLANT DISTRIBUTION IN NEW ENGLAND

Select a study area by clicking the radio button and then click "Submit Selection."

- The whole New England area
- One or more states
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