

Now is the time to remove invasive buckthorn!

The spread of common and glossy buckthorn is creeping across Wisconsin, choking out native vegetation; hoarding nutrients, light and moisture; destroying wildlife habitat; and encouraging soil erosion. Left unchecked, buckthorn can eventually take over a forest floor, destroying native trees and understory growth.

Buckthorn can reach heights of up to 25 feet, may have deep purple berries, and sports glossy egg shaped or oval leaves. It can be identified by its orange inner bark, multiple stems at the base, and loose crown. October is an excellent time for buckthorn

removal because the plant retains its deep green leaves longer than native plants, making identification easier.

Jack Rasmussen of Baldwin devotes much of his free time to educating the public about buckthorn and its eradication. "The number one thing I tell people is don't cut it if you're not also going to treat it. Cutting alone does not kill buckthorn because it will sprout up again with even more stems. Buckthorn should either be removed with a Weed Wrench or cut then chemically treated immediately." Rasmussen has Weed Wrenches and a supply of herbicide available for use by residents of St. Croix County. St. Croix Electric helped fund the purchase of Weed Wrenches through our Commitment to Community grant program. Various other St. Croix County organizations have contributed to the purchase of supplies for Rasmussen's effort.

"When the leaves drop from native trees in the fall," Rasmussen continued, "buckthorn can be cut and treated. There are different chemical methods that can be used. The first is to make a solution of 25%

Roundup/75% water and coat the stump immediately after cutting in the fall. In order for this method to work, the temperature needs to be above freezing. An herbicide called Garlon 4, available at agricultural chemical stores, is extremely effective when applied from late fall through March. My preferred method is to mix 20% Garlon 4 to 80% diesel fuel and either apply the mixture to cut stumps in the late fall or paint a 12 to 14 inch vertical band of it on the bark of a tree from the ground up."

Vigilance is required against the return of buckthorn after the initial removal effort. Birds that have ingested the berries spread seeds rapidly. Once spread, the seeds can live in the soil for several years.

"People need to understand that early identification is very important," explained Rasmussen. "One buckthorn tree can produce thousands of adjacent plants in a matter of a few years."

Jack Rasmussen is available to speak to community groups regarding the spread of buckthorn and to help identify buckthorn. He maintains a supply of buckthorn eradication tools that are available for use by residents of St. Croix County. Weed Wrenches, which mechanically remove buckthorn, may be borrowed free of charge for one week. Garlon 4 is available while supplies last. Rasmussen can be contacted at 715-684-3984 or by e-mail at growvener@yahoo.com.



Buckthorn can be identified by the orange/yellow inner bark, by the deep purple berries of the female trees, and by leaf shape. The simplest way to identify buckthorn is to wait until late fall. Buckthorn retains deep green leaves long after the leaves of native trees have changed color and dropped to the ground. photos from www.invasive.org