

# Buckthorn look alikes

Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) and glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) may be confused with each other and with *Prunus* (cherries, plums) and *Alnus* (alder) species based on leaves and bark. Buckthorns can be most easily differentiated from *Prunus* and *Alnus* species based on flower/fruit characteristics.



**COMMON BUCKTHORN** (left) bark is shiny dark gray with dark lenticels. Leaves are egg-shaped with small teeth; veins curve toward tip of leaf.

**GLOSSY BUCKTHORN** (right) bark is tan with light-colored lenticels. Leaves are egg to oval shaped with no teeth; veins point toward edges of leaf.



**PRUNUS** species (left) like cherries and plums have variable bark color, but younger bark has noticeable lenticels. Prunus leaves are **toothed with an abrupt point at the tip**. Example shown is chokecherry (*P. virginiana*).

**ALDERS** (right) have light-colored lenticels. Leaves have a similar vein pattern to glossy buckthorn but are **toothed**. Example shown is speckled alder (*Alnus incana*).

