

Italian buckthorn (*Rhamnus alaternus*)

Fact sheet

What do they look like?

Italian buckthorn is a large evergreen shrub that grows up to 5m high. It has oval shaped leaves 2-8cm long that are dark glossy green and leathery in texture. The leaves have serrated edges and form singularly along each stem at differing heights. It forms light yellow-green flowers with five petals from August to September which become bright red berries. The berries range in size from 5-7mm in diameter and turn black or brown as they ripen over summer. Seed production has been reported as variable with fruit production estimated at approximately 11,000 berries per plant.



Why should Italian buckthorn be controlled?

Originating from the Mediterranean, Italian buckthorn has become an environmental weed throughout Australia. It was originally planted in

gardens as a hedging plant but has since escaped into the bush. Italian buckthorn can grow in a variety of soil types, including sand dunes, escarpments and wetlands. It is extremely hardy and will grow in full sun, or in partial or full shade.

Italian buckthorn produces large quantities of berries which are spread by birds, ants and wildlife via their scats. It can also spread via suckering, dumped garden waste, or seeds transported in soil.

Italian buckthorn grows quickly and easily from seed, which tend to germinate in autumn or spring. When left, it can form dense thickets which become difficult to control. It grows quickly, easily forming dense shade that can out compete and eventually suppress native plant life.

What are my responsibilities?

Italian buckthorn is a declared weed under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*. This means it is illegal to sell this plant and all property owners have a responsibility to control Italian buckthorn on their property. Residents who rent their properties also have obligations to control declared species. This also includes anyone who is leasing property unless other arrangements have been made.





What are the best ways to control Italian buckthorn?

Italian buckthorn can be controlled in a number of ways depending on their size. Any plants with mature fruit should be removed from site and disposed of in deep burial or via burning to minimise seedling germination. Follow up control is essential for all methods as plants can re-shoot and seedlings may appear.

Chemical control

Basal bark: Basal barking is the preferred method of control. It involves completely saturating the trunk and any branches protruding from the trunk with chemical to a height of at least 30cm above ground level. The bark should be thoroughly sprayed and wet on all sides to point of runoff. An application rate of 1L of triclopyr 600g/L mixed with 30L of biodiesel or diesel should be used for treatment.

Foliar spray: Plants can be controlled via foliar spray but all stems and leaves will need to be treated. A glyphosate + metsulfuron-methyl + good wetting agent can be used for effective results, but requires large amounts of chemical to ensure coverage of whole plant. This method is not suitable in native vegetation due to the risk of off-target damage. An application rate of 1L of

glyphosate 360g/L mixed with 3g of metsulfuron methyl (600g/kg) + a surfactant should be used.

Cut and swab: Plants need to be cut at the base and swabbed immediately with chemical. Larger plants may re-shoot so follow up is essential. Vigilant II should be used for treatment. Glyphosate (450g/L) at an application rate of 1L mixed with 4L of water should be used.

Drill and fill: This technique can be used to control larger plants as there is less risk of re-shooting. Holes need to be drilled in the base of the plant using a 10mm drill bit approximately 3cm apart and 4cm deep. Each hole is then filled with chemical (glyphosate & water 1:4) and topped-up at least twice or until chemical uptake has slowed.

Mechanical control

Small plants and seedlings can be pulled from the ground eliminating chemical use. You must ensure that the whole root is removed to prevent reshooting.

Do you have Italian buckthorn?

If you think you have Italian buckthorn on your property, Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board staff can provide advice on control and management.

More information

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