

**From:** City of Minnetonka <CityofMinnetonka@public.govdelivery.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 1, 2020 10:01 AM  
**To:** Christine Petersen  
**Subject:** March Natural Resources: The Problem With Buckthorn; Events; Join the Bassett Creek Board

# City of Minnetonka

## The Problem With Buckthorn



When European settlers came to North America, they brought familiar plants for food, medicine and landscaping. Among these was common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*). Settlers planted and shaped buckthorn hedges to block wind and increase privacy. The berries they used medicinally, including as a natural laxative.

With its multi purposes top of mind, no one could have predicted the impact the plant would have on its new environment.

What once spoke of resourcefulness has since become a significant environmental problem. Buckthorn is extremely invasive. It forms dense, almost impenetrable stands that shade out and replace native species, thereby reducing diversity in woodlands.

## Identifying the Culprit



Look for these characteristics to distinguish invasive buckthorn from similar-looking native shrubs, such as chokecherry, gray dogwood or American plum:

- Paired leaf buds at the tip of most twigs, resembling a tiny hoof print with a thorn in between (hence the plant's common name)
- Oval leaves with tiny teeth, growing almost opposite each other
- Black berries that cling to the stem through early winter

## Winning the Battle



It's best to remove buckthorn in stages, over a period of years. Clearcutting promotes explosive growth of garlic mustard and other weedy plants.

1. In winter, target female buckthorn with fruit to limit seed dispersal.
2. Cut stumps about a foot high (making them easy to find later).
3. Return in early spring (any snow-free day above 32 degrees) to re-cut stumps about one inch above the ground.
4. Apply an herbicide solution of 20 percent glyphosate to the outer growth rings of freshly cut stumps. Wick applicators are ideal.
5. Bag up buckthorn berries and deposit them in the trash (not with organic recycling or compost). Transport woody debris to the city's brush drop, or chip onsite for mulch.
6. Attend one of the city's buckthorn workshops – held in March, September, and October – to learn best removal practices. See below for details.



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## Upcoming Events

Learn ecologically sound techniques to control buckthorn. **RSVP required.** Visit [minnetonkamn.gov/NRsignup](http://minnetonkamn.gov/NRsignup) or call 952-988-8400.

- **Buckthorn Workshop**  
Wednesday, March 11, 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
Minnetonka Community Center (14600 Minnetonka Blvd.)
- **Volunteer Buckthorn Cutting**  
Cut buckthorn to clear space for native species. Contact Janet Van Sloun at 952-988-8423 for details.
  - **Cullen Preserve**, 2510 Oakland Road  
Saturday, March 28, 9:30 a.m.-noon
  - **Orchard Park**, 12595 Orchard Road  
Saturday, April 4, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.



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## Join the Bassett Creek Watershed Board of Commissioners

Are you passionate about our community's water resources and looking for a way to get involved?

- We're seeking a volunteer to represent Minnetonka as a commissioner for the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission.
- For more information, visit [minnetonkamn.gov](http://minnetonkamn.gov).



 Bassett Creek Watershed District



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