Invasive Species Alert

COMMON BUCKTHORN

(RHAMNUS CATHARTICA)

ESTABLISHED IN MICHIGAN

IDENTIFICATION:

- Deciduous small tree or shrub – can reach 25 feet tall.
- Leaves are dark- green, oval and slightly toothed.
- In spring, small, yellow-green, four-petaled flowers grow in clusters of two to six at the base of leaves.
- Small, purple to black fruits ripen in the fall.
- Twigs often have a single, sharp thorn at their tip.
- Distinctive orange inner bark.

HABITAT: Common buckthorn can be found in disturbed and undisturbed areas including roadsides, pastures, old fields and woodlots.

NATIVE RANGE: Europe and Asia.

U. S. DISTRIBUTION: East Coast and Midwest, also in limited areas of California and Oregon.

MICHIGAN DISTRIBUTION: Established and widespread in Michigan.

LOCAL CONCERN: This invasive plant spreads quickly through seeds distributed by birds and wildlife and crowds out native shrubs and understory plants. It is a host for alfalfa mosaic virus and crown fungus, and may be a possible host for the soybean aphid.

REPORT THIS SPECIES: Visit MISIN.MSU.edu or download the MISIN smartphone app and report it from your phone.

Photos courtesy of Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org.