

DIE BUCKTHORN by Ney Tait Fraser

Doctors Park Friends

Buckthorn is an unwelcome weed in the Village of Fox Point. There are several methods to get rid of buckthorn on your property.

The first step is to identify buckthorn. Visit <https://sewisc.org/invasive-plants/167-buckthorn> for a description and pictures, and tips about removal. If possible, female plants should be taken out first. Female plants, when in fruit, have black berries with two or more seeds.

HAND REMOVAL

Taking buckthorn out by hand avoids—obviously—using chemicals. Borrow the village's Uprooter weed wrench tool—for free, from the No-Grow-Co. Buckthorn plants with stems up to three inches in diameter can be levered out of the ground with relative ease. Sometimes it is necessary to chop off large, anchoring roots. Smaller buckthorn seedlings can be dug up using a pick axe, grub hoe or sharp shovels. Disturbed areas should be seeded or planted with appropriate native plants. Native understory shrubs are good replacements for buckthorn. Hand removal and replacement can be done throughout the growing season. Try not to disturb any bird nests.

LOPPERS

Lopping buckthorn with stems up to two inches in diameter is quicker and easier than using saws. Ken Solis M.D., a veteran weeder, recommends Friskars Powergear 2 loppers. By staying with one company and model line, blades can be replaced when they are damaged beyond repair. The 32" model cuts the largest specimens. There are also 18" and 25" models. The cambium of cut stems must be painted with tricolopyr to prevent regrowth. Put the chemical in a small jar inside a bucket to prevent spilling. Wear gloves. Painting cut stumps with a woody, oil based herbicide in which the active ingredient (ai) is tricolopyr is the only sure way to kill buckthorn. Do not use too much herbicide because it will kill the stump. This will prevent the translocation of herbicide to the buckthorn roots. Roots can be left to rot. Lopping and painting the stumps should be done during the fall. Herbicides with the active ingredient tricolopyr are available on Amazon or eBay. Be sure the herbicide you purchase has the correct percentage of active ingredient tricolopyr. A 12.5% active ingredient tricolopyr formulated for oil dilution is effective as a cut stump treatment.

SAWS

The "cut stump" method is labor intensive, but most effective. Silky brand of Japanese saws are superb. They enable one to cut through the stems of buckthorn close to the ground. For medium sized buckhorn specimens, the Silky Bigboy 2000 6.5 would be a good choice. To cut large specimens, the Silky-Kantanaboy-500 is effective. It can be slung across one's back in a nylon bag. When folded, it is 26" long (over 4ft long when the blade is exposed). Corona razor toothed saws cut a little better than bow saws especially when the bark is wet. Chain saws are powerful, but they are dangerous. Felled buckthorn can be piled up and burned. All cut stems should be treated with herbicide with a 12.5% active ingredient tricolopyr (formulated for oil dilution). This type of control should be undertaken in the fall.

GIRDLING

If having a dead tree on the property is not an aesthetic issue, there are several ways to kill buckthorn by girdling mature specimens. One can use an axe, a saw or a professional girdling tool to remove a two to five inch strip of bark from the circumference of the base of the tree.

Forestry Suppliers, Inc., sells tree girdling tools online. Cut through the bark slightly deeper than the cambium. Paint the exposed area with herbicide to prevent it from healing. Girdles should be checked after a few weeks to make sure that bark does not develop over the cut area. Girdled trees take time to die. The results may not be seen until a year later. Basically, the tree is slowly starving to death. All suckers should be cut and treated with herbicide. (12.5% active ingredient triclopyr formulated for oil dilution). It is also possible to kill buckthorn right where it stands, by applying triclopyr herbicide to the bark at the base of the trunk of trees 6" or less in diameter. Called 'basal-bark' treatment this has disadvantages if one has hundreds of small trees to deal with. Basal bark application of 6% a.i. triclopyr formulated for oil dilution is effective. Girdling can be done all year long.

HIRING A PROFESSIONAL TREE OR LANDSCAPING CONTRACTOR.

If property owners do not have the time, stamina or the tools to eliminate buckthorn, reputable landscape firms do a thorough job.