

# Italian buckthorn (*Rhamnus alaternus*)



Italian Buckthorn (*Rhamnus alaternus*) is invading woodlands, dune systems and riparian vegetation. The shrub grows vigorously into a bulky shape which restricts the growth of native plants and shades the soil preventing native plants from germinating and establishing.

It originates from the Mediterranean and has been widely planted in gardens and hedges in Australia. It is now an environmental weed in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland.

## Description

Italian Buckthorn is a large, evergreen shrub with a dense canopy which grows to a height of 4 m. It is very hardy and can grow in full sun, or partial or almost full shade.

The shiny, green leaf has a wide, oval shape with a prominent mid-vein, serrated edge and leathery texture, and is 2–8 cm long. Flowers form small clusters of yellow–green, fragrant, star-shaped flowers. Flowers have five petals and are 3–4 mm in diameter.

The fruit is an egg-shaped berry up to 7 mm long. They begin red and ripen to black over summer.

Italian buckthorn produces large quantities of seed which are spread by birds and possums. It also reproduces by suckering and is easily spread in dumped garden waste. Seeds germinate in autumn or spring.

The roots grow from a woody lignotuber at the base of the trunk and form a large taproot.

## Location

Italian buckthorn is spreading from:

- the intersection of Franks Road and Hog Bay Road at Grassy Flat
- Emu Bay sand dunes
- Smith Bay
- Kingscote foreshore.

## Control methods

Spray leaves with herbicide before fruit forms. Check for re-sprouting from plants over 1.5 m tall.

Cut and scrape the stem and swab with herbicide or drill into the trunk and fill with herbicide.

Dig out or spray seedlings and saplings with herbicide (tops break easily so don't pull them out).

For advice on chemical control techniques contact the Natural Resources Centre in Kingscote or download the *Weed control handbook for declared plants in South Australia* for advice on chemical control:

[http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds\\_and\\_pest\\_animals/weeds\\_in\\_sa](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds_and_pest_animals/weeds_in_sa).

## Declarations

The following sections of the NRM Act apply to Italian buckthorn on Kangaroo Island:

**177** (1) Cannot sell the plant

**177** (2) Cannot sell any produce / goods carrying the plant

**182** (2) Landowner must control the plant on their land



## For more information

**Kangaroo Island Natural Resources Centre**

37 Dauncey Street, Kingscote

P (08) 8553 4444

E [kinrc@sa.gov.au](mailto:kinrc@sa.gov.au)

[www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/kangarooisland/](http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/kangarooisland/)

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**Natural Resources**  
Kangaroo Island



Government  
of South Australia