Italian Buckthorn

Rhamnus alaternus

Height: 15 feet

Spread: 6 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐ ●

Hardiness Zone: 7b

Other Names: Mediterranean Buckthorn

Description:

An upright growing, evergreen shrub that takes pruning well, and is best used as a screen or hedge; showy red berries mature to dark purple; tough and adaptable, tolerating heat and wind; can be trained as a small tree



Italian Buckthorn
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Italian Buckthorn is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. The fruits are showy red drupes which fade to deep purple over time, which are carried in abundance from late spring to mid summer. The fruit can be messy if allowed to drop on the lawn or walkways, and may require occasional clean-up. It has attractive dark green evergreen foliage which emerges light green in spring. The glossy oval leaves are highly ornamental and remain dark green throughout the winter.



Italian Buckthorn fruit
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Italian Buckthorn is a multi-stemmed evergreen shrub with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its average texture blends into the landscape, but can be balanced by one or two finer or coarser trees or shrubs for an effective composition.

This shrub will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and can be pruned at anytime. It is a good choice for attracting birds to your yard. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Invasive

Italian Buckthorn is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Hedges/Screening
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens

Planting & Growing

Italian Buckthorn will grow to be about 15 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 6 feet. It tends to be a little leggy, with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 30 years. This is a dioecious species, meaning that individual plants are either male or female. Only the females will produce fruit, and a male variety of the same species is required nearby as a pollinator.

This shrub performs well in both full sun and full shade. It is very adaptable to both dry and moist locations, and should do just fine under average home landscape conditions. It is not particular as to soil type or pH, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This species is not originally from North America, and parts of it are known to be toxic to humans and animals, so care should be exercised in planting it around children and pets.