



Buckthorn Considered the Fast Food of the Natural World

By: Commissioners Nicole Molinaro & Lee Kaufman

How can that be? Buckthorn shares similarities of being convenient, not nutritious and is everywhere. Berries eaten have a very strong laxative effect which helps it spread aggressively and why it is invasive. A Public Act (SB3433) passed this year to promote eradication on both public and private land.

“Woody invasive species like European buckthorn and bush honeysuckles make up over **one in three trees** in the region. These shrubs were introduced as ornamental specimens, but they have escaped cultivation. They create dense thickets and prevent other species from growing around them. In natural areas, they are one of the leading contributors to reduced oak regeneration.”

(Pictures from Westchester taken recently)

- CRTI Urban Forestry Summary <https://chicagorti.org/app/uploads/2022/09/WestchesterSummary.pdf>

How can Buckthorn be so Harmful?



- Creates a food desert for pollinators
- Alters the soil negatively, encouraging growth of other invasive species
- Harms water quality and increases erosion
- Friends of the Mississippi River <https://fmr.org/updates/conservation/buckthorn-how-can-shrub-be-so-harmful>

(MWRD=Metropolitan Water Reclamation District)
(FPDCC=Forest Preserve District of Cook County)



Westchester, MWRD and FPDCC are investing millions to:

- Increase water holding capacity
- Mitigate invasive species
- Protect tree and plant diversity

Westchester and MWRD have collectively spent millions in the last few years for green infrastructure initiatives such as:

- ’22-’24-Tree Plantings (\$175,267)
- ’23-Tree Inventory and Plan (\$46,170)
- ’21/’24-Green Alleys (\$2,430,000)
- ’23-Detention Basins at Cemetery Ponds (\$414,000) and Mastodon Creek (\$263,500)

Our Top 5 Reasons Why we Need to Protect our Native Species:

1. Save energy by reducing surface temperatures and shading buildings
2. Store carbon dioxide and remove pollutants from the air
3. Intercept stormwater and help reduce flooding
4. Increase property values and make our communities more pleasant
5. Improve health



Our Community Call To Action:

Collectively as a community we can be a part of the ecological solution forward to eliminate buckthorn. Successful eradication is a 2 year commitment which will help our native environments such as our local forest preserves, prairie, parks, waterways and other public spaces to thrive, not wither away. Do you have an invasive species on your property? The GROW commission has asked the Village to consider taking action regarding Buckthorn on public property and to engage with our other local governmental bodies. FPDCC and MWRD are actively removing many areas of Buckthorn within their properties. (<https://phys.org/news/2023-06-uproot-decades-buckthorn.html>)

What can You do to Eliminate Invasive Species in your Backyard?



- Be on look out for Buckthorn removal events around the village
- Be part of the conversation, GROW meetings are the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM in Board Room
- Review MWRD Green Neighbor Guide for some easy tips to follow. https://mwrdd.org/sites/default/files/documents/Green_Guide_191220.pdf
- Check out Conservation@Home for at-home guidance on environmentally sound landscape practices. <https://extension.illinois.edu/cook/conservationhome>
- If you have a landscaper, ask them for assistance in removal of buckthorn and replacement suggestions.

If we all come together for the next 2 years to eliminate buckthorn in our community we will be protecting not only our investment in green infrastructure we will also improve our native species diversity building resilience and sustainability.

- FPDCC What is Restoration? <https://fpdcc.com/nature/restoration/>

- *Management of Invasive Plants and Pests of IL* - https://extension.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/management_of_invasive_plants_and_pests_of_illinois.pdf