WHY REPLACE BUCKTHORN AND HONEYSUCKLE IN YOUR YARD?

Woody invasive plants, such as common and glossy buckthorn (Rhamnus cathartica and Rhamnus frangula) or Eurasian bush-honeysuckles (Lonicera spp.), form dense thickets and reproduce aggressively, shading out other plants and disrupting ecosystems in forest preserves and other natural areas. In woodlands, they can completely replace young trees and understory plants, including native wildflowers. Buckthorn also causes long-lasting damage to the soil and wildlife habitat where it grows. Unfortunately, they are also commonly found in residential landscaping. This guide suggests shrubs that can be planted to replace invasive hedges or screens being removed.

HOW TO GROW A SCREEN OR HEDGE

Freeform screening – Shrub species can be grown without “formal pruning” using their natural structure.

Formal hedges – Start with 18”-24” plants, cutting back to 6” to cause low branching. Cut off half the new growth over the next two years. Start shaping the hedge the third year; making the base broader than the top. Formal hedges must be sheared 2 or more times each year.

Naturalistic hedges – Informal hedges grow best when plants are kept at about ¾ of their full size. Start with shrubs that will get a little bigger than the size of the hedge you want. Once a year, these hedges need a light overall pruning and a renewal pruning (cutting ⅓ of the older canes off at ground level).

Buckthorn is a large shrub or tall tree with glossy oval leaves that can easily be recognized in fall, when it remains green after most other leaves have fallen. Buckthorn has berries that are spread by birds. Under the Illinois Exotic Weed Act, buckthorn cannot be sold in Illinois.

HEALTHY HEDGES

Healthy Hedges is a collaborative campaign to reduce the damage caused by invasive woody plants in the Chicago Region. As of 2010, invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle made up 30% of all the trees in the seven county region. Land managers in the region fight a constant—and expensive—battle to protect our shared natural areas from the effects of these woody plants. Help them protect our forests and prairies by replacing invasive hedges in your yard with shrubs from this guide!

Learning how to identify and eradicate invasive species and where to purchase replacement shrubs at: ChicagoRTI.org/HealthyHedges

Join the conversation on social media with: #HealthyHedges