

# Prairie Fen Companion *Plant facts*

Common buckthorn

## *Rhamnus cathartica*



C=0

Color: yellow

5 regular parts

**Plant type:** Flowering shrub or small tree.

**Bloom period:** May - June

**Distinguishing characteristics:** Alternate oblong pointed leaves that sometimes are nearly opposite, with veins arising from one midvein, then rejoining it. Leaves have regular, small teeth. Woody plant, seedlings are several inches tall, grows to 15 feet tall. Large plants have long thorn-like growths emerging from larger stems. Small, five-petaled, greenish flowers grow in flattened clusters and turn to berries that ripen to black. Further images may be found at <http://www.invasive.org/weedcd/species/3070.htm>.

**Habitat quality:** This plant is a non-native invasive, which is likely to become a dominant plant along the edges of prairie fen and push out native species if not managed using fire and herbicide. While it tends to grow in drier areas than glossy buckthorn, it can be found growing in wet areas mixed in with it.

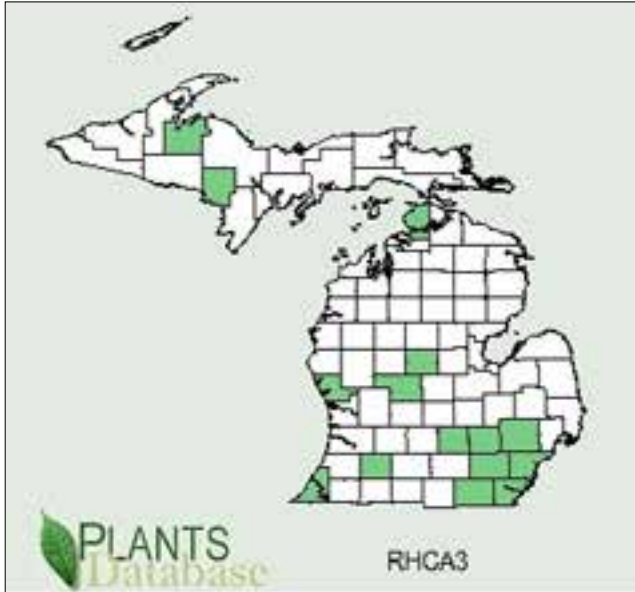
Flower photo credit: Chris Evans, River to River CWMA, Bugwood.org

MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY

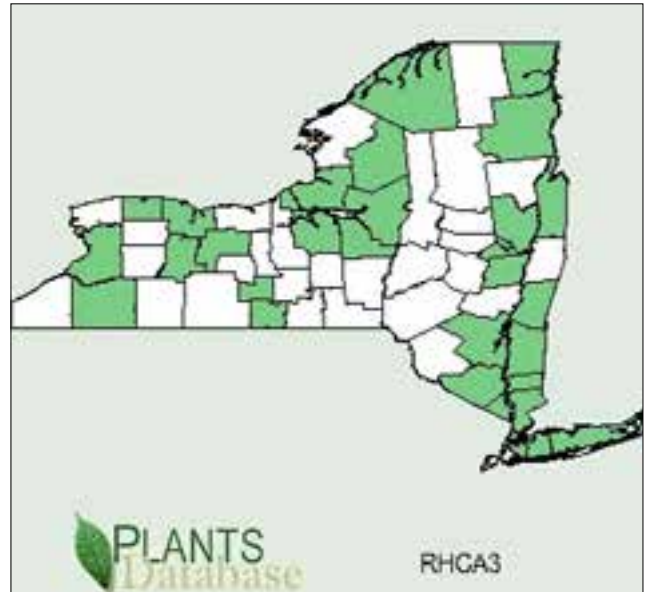


Developed by: Doug Landis and Anna Fiedler, MSU Department of Entomology. Funding support: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Lynn and Thelma MacCready Forest and Wildlife Endowment, MSU, and Hanes Trust of the Michigan Botanical Club. Partners: The Nature Conservancy, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, The Stewardship Network, Michigan DNR Landowner Incentive Program. For more information on native plants and prairie fens, go to [www.nativeplants.msu.edu](http://www.nativeplants.msu.edu).

## Where can you find this plant?



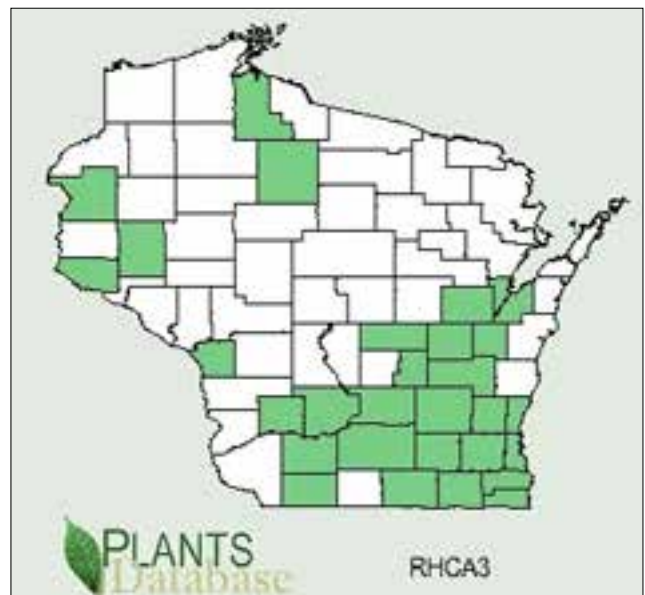
Michigan



New York



Ohio



Wisconsin

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## Key description

### C=

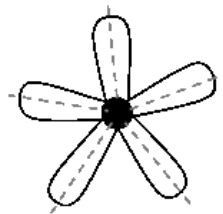
Coefficient of conservatism. This is a value that ranges from 0 for non-native invasives to 10 for plants that would only be expected to be found in undisturbed, high quality plant communities. It is a general guideline for whether the plant would be likely to be found in an intact prairie fen (not filled in with shrubs and without invasive species). However, C values may be high for some species that are not found in prairie fen but would be part of another wetland such as a marsh. They are included here because they are a widely accepted measure of habitat quality in the Midwest (<http://1.usa.gov/FQAMethod>).

### Flower type

Classifications here follow those of Newcomb's wildflower guide (<http://amzn.com/0316604429>).

### Number of regular parts

The flower has this number of petals or petal-like parts that are symmetrical from the flower center (radial), with each similar to the other in shape, size, and color. There may be 3 to 7 regular parts. See image at right.



### Aster

These flowers have regular parts and are symmetrical from the center, but there are more than 7. Asters have a set of disc flowers in the center of the flower and a set of ray flowers outside of the disc flowers, often called petals. They are one group (genus) within the family Asteraceae, and there are many species in this genus.

### Flowers not readily obvious

The flowers of plants such as grasses, sedges, and cattail are not obvious and are often confused with the fruits (seeds) of these species. While this website does not include flower descriptions for these species, they do flower.

### Irregular

The flower is not symmetrical from the center but is symmetrical down a line (bilateral). See image at right.



### No flowers

A number of primitive plants, including ferns, do not flower but make spores in order to reproduce.

### Parts indistinguishable

These species either have parts so small their number is difficult to determine or have no petal-like parts. This group includes goldenrods, other species with small individual flowers, and plants in the family Asteraceae that have more than 7 parts, but the parts do not form distinguishable, symmetrical ray flowers (which are often called petals).