

Native Woody Plants Potentially Confused with Invasive Woody Plants



Photo of Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*)
by Donald Cameron from GoBotany

Maine Natural Areas Program
Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry



Honeysuckle Family



Photo by Donald Cameron from GoBotany

Bush Honeysuckle- *Diervilla lonicera* (Native species)

Habitat: dry forest, forest edges, fields

- ▶ Leaf margins toothed; edges sometimes fringed with small hairs
- ▶ Solid pith
- ▶ Fruit is an elongated capsule



Photo by Arthur Haines from GoBotany

Fly Honeysuckle- *Lonicera canadensis* (Native species)

Habitat: dry forest

- ▶ Leaves and stems mostly non-hairy
- ▶ Solid pith
- ▶ Leaf margins entire; edges fringed with small hairs
- ▶ Bud scales low and shorter than buds
- ▶ Fruit is a red berry
- ▶ Leaves 1-3" long
- ▶ Height 6'



Photo by Arthur Haines from GoBotany

Mountain Honeysuckle- *Lonicera villosa* (Native species)

Habitat: forest, bogs and fens, fields, wetland edges

- ▶ Solid pith
- ▶ Hairy bud scales cover buds
- ▶ Leaves and stems usually very hairy
- ▶ Leaf edges fringed with small hairs
- ▶ Fruit is a red berry
- ▶ Leaves 1-2.5" long
- ▶ Height 3.5'

Non-native look alike: Shrubby Honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*, *L. tatarica*)

Key differences:

- ▶ Non-native pith is hollow; native pith is solid
- ▶ Non-native is usually hairy; native is sometimes hairy

Maple Family



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Silver Maple- *Acer saccharinum* (Native species)

Habitat: floodplains, forests, swamps, freshwater shores

- ▶ Bark is grayish and flakes when mature
- ▶ Leaves deeply 5-lobed with base of terminal lobe narrowed
- ▶ Leaves whiteish and sometimes hairy on underside
- ▶ Broken twigs smell bad
- ▶ Leaves: 2-10"
- ▶ Height: 40-60'
- ▶ Diameter: 1-3'



Photo by Arthur Haines from GoBotany

Sugar Maple- *Acer saccharum* (Native species)

Habitat: floodplains, forests, talus and rocky slopes

- ▶ Bark dark brown with rough vertical furrows and ridges
- ▶ Leaves moderately deeply mostly 5-lobed
- ▶ Leaves pale green on underside, occasionally whiteish
- ▶ Brown buds slender, sharp-pointed
- ▶ Leaves: 2-10"
- ▶ Height: 40-60'
- ▶ Diameter: 1-2'



Photo by Donald Cameron from GoBotany

Red Maple- *Acer rubrum* (Native species)

Habitat: Forests, meadows and fields, freshwater shores, swamps and wetland margins, forest edges

- ▶ Smooth gray young bark turns darker and broken with maturation
- ▶ Leaves 3-5 lobed, notches are shallow, and whitened underside
- ▶ Twigs and buds reddish
- ▶ Leaves: 2-8"
- ▶ Height: 20-40'
- ▶ Diameter: 1-2'

Non-native look alike: Amur Maple (*Acer ginnala*) versus Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*)

Key differences:

- ▶ Norway Maple has milky sap when leaf broken off
- ▶ Norway Maple buds are large, green and reddish, blunt
- ▶ Amur Maple leaf can be 5-lobed or unlobed

Buckthorn Look-Alikes



Photo by Donald Cameron from GoBotany

Chokecherry- *Prunus virginiana* (Native species)

Habitat: forest edges, meadows and fields, shrublands and thickets, woodlands

- ▶ Leaves egg shaped with sharp tooth margins
- ▶ Leaf midrib hairless
- ▶ Leaves 2-5"
- ▶ Height 6-20'
- ▶ Diameter 2-6"
- ▶ Flowers white; fruit purplish



Black Chokeberry- *Aronia melanocarpa* (Native species)

Habitat: bogs and fens, cliffs and balds, swamps, woodlands

- ▶ Leaves fine-toothed and elliptic
- ▶ Hairless
- ▶ Fruits black
- ▶ Leaves 2-5"
- ▶ Height 20'

**Non-native look alike: common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*),
glossy buckthorn (*Fragula alnus*)**

Key differences:

- ▶ Common buckthorn fruit is glossy black, leaves simple, toothed and elliptical, almost round
- ▶ Glossy buckthorn fruit is black-purplish, leaves simple, entire and elliptical

Rose Family



Photo by Donald Cameron from GoBotany

Flowering Raspberry- *Rubus odoratus* (Native species)

Habitat: forests, ridges and ledges, talus and rocky slopes, woodlands

- ▶ Thornless shrub
- ▶ Leaves 3- to 5-lobed and toothed; nearly hairless to velvety-hair
- ▶ Twigs usually hairy but can be hairless
- ▶ Flowers rose-purple
- ▶ Leaves 4-15"
- ▶ Height 5'



Photo by Arthur Haines from GoBotany

Roses- *Rosa* sp. (Native species)

Habitat: widespread

- ▶ Stipules are entire
- ▶ Prickles are not dense
- ▶ Leaves not deeply veined
- ▶ Flowers are pink
- ▶ Clusters of only a few flowers



Photo by Arthur Haines from GoBotany

Red Raspberry- *Rubus idaeus* (Native species)

Habitat: forest edges, forests, meadows and fields, freshwater shores, shrublands and thickets, swamps and wetland margins

- ▶ Arching shrub with thorny stems
- ▶ Leaves have 3-7 elliptic leaflets, whiteish on underside
- ▶ Flowers white, fruit red
- ▶ Leaves 3-10"
- ▶ Height 6'

Non-native look alike: multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), rugosa rose (*Rosa rugosa*)

Key differences:

- ▶ Multiflora rose has fringed stipules and white flowers in large clusters (many flowers together)
- ▶ Rugosa rose has dense prickly stems and heavily veined leaves that appear wrinkled

Miscellaneous



Photo by Donald Cameron from GoBotany

Shrubby Willow- *Salix* sp. (Native species)

Habitat: widespread

- ▶ Produce “first leaves” from overwintered bud then “new leaves” grow on ends of branches
- ▶ Leaves sometimes hairy, occasionally red-brown
- ▶ Leaf underside lightened but not shiny

Non-native look alike: Autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)

Key differences:

- ▶ Prefers forest edges, meadows and fields, and disturbed sites
- ▶ Leaves with silvery and/or brown scales along twigs
- ▶ May have wood spines up to 1” on branches



Photo by Donald Cameron from GoBotany

Sumac shrubs- *Rhus* sp. (Native species)

Habitat:

- ▶ More than 3 leaflets for each feather-compound leaf
- ▶ Leaflets occur in opposing pairs, usually
- ▶ Upright shrubs
- ▶ Twigs are stout and pithy, numerous bundle scars
- ▶ Side-buds are mostly hidden by leafstalk bases; end-buds are false
- ▶ Milky sap (except poison sumac)
- ▶ Flowers are small greenish and clustered; dense spikes of small, dry, red, hairy fruits (except poison sumac)

Non-native look alike: tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

Key differences:

- ▶ Leaves have 11-41 leaflets
- ▶ Leaflets not toothed except for glad-tipped teeth at base
- ▶ Twigs yellow-brown, stout
- ▶ Pith is yellow



Winterberry holly- *Ilex verticillata* (Native species)

Habitat: Shores of freshwater, swamps, wetland margins

- ▶ Small to large shrub
- ▶ Leaves usually wide but vary from narrow to rounded
- ▶ Leaves have dull tops with distinct teeth
- ▶ Leaves may be hairy on underside
- ▶ Buds are blunt with broadly pointed scales
- ▶ Leaves are 2-4"
- ▶ Height 15'
- ▶ Flowers are red, occasionally yellow

Non-native look alike: common or glossy buckthorn

Key differences:

- ▶ Leaves may or may not be toothed
- ▶ Height can be 20-25'
- ▶ Lack thorns but may have woody spines at the end of twigs
- ▶ Arching leaf veins
- ▶ See page 19 for more details on common and glossy buckthorn

Other Native Shrubs Common in Parts of Maine



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Witch-hazel- *Hamamelis* sp. (Native species)

Habitat: Floodplains, forests, swamps, talus and rocky slopes

- ▶ Shrub or small tree
- ▶ Leaves wavy-toothed, uneven based
- ▶ *H. virginiana* usually hairless; *H. vernalis* usually woolly
- ▶ Flowers yellow, blooming early spring/late winter or fall
- ▶ Leaves 2-7"
- ▶ Height 10-25'



Photo by Donald Cameron from GoBotany

Maleberry- *Lyonia ligustrina* (Native species)

Habitat: Forest, wetland margins

- ▶ Shrub
- ▶ Leaves thick, narrow to egg-shaped
- ▶ Leaf underside typically hairy
- ▶ Twigs may be hairy near tips
- ▶ Leaves 1-4"
- ▶ Height 13'



Photo by Arthur Haines from GoBotany

Blueberries- *Vaccinium* sp. (Native species)

Habitat: Alpine or subalpine zones, cliffs, balds, ledges, grassland, meadows and fields, summits and plateaus, ridges and ledges, woodlands

- ▶ Leaves small, mostly elliptic with short stalks
- ▶ Twigs are green or red; slender and might be zig-zagged
- ▶ Twigs have tiny raised warts
- ▶ Small buds; small scales with typically tapered tip
- ▶ 1 bundle scar per leaf scar
- ▶ Small bell-shaped white flowers
- ▶ Fruit is blue or black, edible



Photo by Donald Cameron from GoBotany

Dogwood shrubs- *Cornus sp.* (Native species)

Habitat:

- ▶ Most have opposite leaves
- ▶ Leaf veins are parallel to leaf edges
- ▶ Twigs, branches, and piths are distinctive to species
- ▶ Leaves, when broken, often have a fine thread from the veins

Invasive Shrubs in Maine

Common Name	Scientific Name(s)	Key Identifying Feature(s)
Autumn Olive	<i>Elaeagnus umbellata</i>	Lower surface of leaves silvery
Black Locust	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	Large spines grow in pairs on trunks and branches
Burning Bush	<i>Euonymus alatus</i>	Stems have “wings”
Common Buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>	Small woody spines at end of branches; orange inner bark
Common Barberry	<i>Berberis vulgaris</i>	2-3 sharp spines at nodes
February Daphne	<i>Daphne mezereum</i>	Low shrub with wedge shaped leaves and very tough bark
Glossy Buckthorn	<i>Frangula alnus</i>	Simple, alternate, elliptical, glossy leaves; red roots
Japanese Barberry	<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>	1 sharp spine at node; yellow root interior
Multiflora Rose	<i>Rosa multiflora</i>	Leaf petiole is fringed at base
Norway Maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i>	Broken petiole oozes white sap
Porcelainberry	<i>Ampelopsis glandulosa</i>	Woody climbing vine with alternate 3-5 lobed leaves with white undersides
Privets	<i>Ligustrum obtusifolium</i> ; <i>L. vulgare</i>	Tubular, white flowers; round fruit blue-black when mature
Shrubby Honeysuckles	<i>Lonicera morrowii</i> ; <i>L. tatarica</i> ; <i>L. x bella</i>	Leaves may be hairy underneath; pith is hollow
Tree of Heaven	<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>	Crushed leaves and pith small like rancid peanut butter

Resources

- ▶ “Maine Invasive Plants Field Guide.” produced by Maine Natural Areas Program; Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, 2019
- ▶ “Mistaken Identify? Invasive Plants and their Native Look-Alikes; an Identification Guide for the Mid-Atlantic.” Delaware Department of Agriculture, 2008
- ▶ “Trees and Shrubs.” George A. Petrides and Roger Tory Peterson; Peterson Field Guides, 1972
- ▶ GoBotany: <https://gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org/>, 2021