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CORRECTION: *RHAMNUS CATHARTICA* L. IS NOT
PRUNUS NIGRA AIT. FROM ALBERTA

R. Keith Shaw¹

ABSTRACT.—The plant previously reported from Alberta as Canada Plum (*Prunus nigra* Ait.) flowered and is now recognized European Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica* L.).

The report of Canada Plum (*Prunus nigra* Ait.) in Alberta (Cody and Shaw 1973, Shaw 1976) was based on material collected without flowers or fruit from south Alberta. The preliminary identification was made from floral manuals only, with later verification through comparison with known *Prunus nigra* material at the Vascular Plant Herbarium of the Canada Department of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Several years later these south Alberta plants flowered and fruited. Much to my dismay, it was not *Prunus nigra*, but an adventive species hitherto unreported for Alberta to which *Prunus nigra* bears an uncanny resemblance, *Rhamnus cathartica* L., the European Buckthorn. This species was introduced from Europe and is now found growing wild as a coarse shrub or small tree in the valley of Lee Creek at Cardston, Alberta. Two ornamental plantings are now also known for the town of Cardston.

When the plants are in flower or fruit no real difficulty is encountered in correctly identifying European Buckthorn, which has flowers small, greenish, perfect, regular, perigynous with an annular disk; sepals 4; petals much reduced to wanting; stamens 4, inserted on the disk opposite the rudimentary petals; pistil 1, the ovary inserted in the disk, 4-loculed, each locule 1-seeded; fruit juicy, berrylike, and bitter.

However, a comparison of vegetative characteristics will show how readily a person unfamiliar with these two species might make an error:

<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>	<i>Prunus nigra</i>
European Buckthorn	Canada Plum

spine-tipped branchlets	thornlike twigs
no terminal bud	no terminal bud
toothed leaves, thin and fragile	double-toothed leaves, thin and fragile
leaves dark green above, lighter below	leaves dull dark green above, paler beneath
leaves tend toward opposite or clustered	leaves clustered
leaf margin glandular	leaf margin glandular
scaly winter buds	scaly winter buds
twigs slender, reddish-brown	twigs slender, smooth, reddish-brown
bark smooth, dark greyish-brown, becoming scaly with age	bark black with greyish lenticels, splitting vertically, scaly with age
short, crooked trunk divided at or just above ground	short, crooked trunk divided at or just above ground
crown irregular; slender zig-zag branches	crown narrow and flat-topped; slender, twisted, zig-zag branches
small tree or large shrub	small tree

I regret any inconvenience this erroneous report of *Prunus nigra* has caused. I will gladly supply herbarium specimens of south Alberta *Rhamnus cathartica* on request.

LITERATURE CITED

- CODY, W. J., AND K. SHAW. 1973. Canada Plum in southwestern Alberta. *Blue Jay* 31:217-219.
- SHAW, R. K. 1976. A taxonomic and ecologic study of the riverbottom forest on St. Mary River, Lee Creek, and Belly River in southwestern Alberta, Canada. *Great Basin Nat.* 36:243-271.

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