Variegated Italian Buckthorn

Rhamnus alaternus 'Argenteovariegata'



Variegated Italian Buckthorn foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 10 feet

Spread: 10 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 7

Other Names: Mediterranean Buckthorn, R. alaternus Variegata

Description:

An upright growing, evergreen shrub that takes pruning well, and is best used as a screen or hedge; showy gray-green leaves with creamy white edges; golden flowers in summer, followed by red berries; tolerates heat and wind; can be trained as a small tree

Ornamental Features

Variegated Italian Buckthorn is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. The fruits are showy red drupes which fade to deep purple over time, which are carried in abundance from late summer to mid fall. The fruit can be messy if allowed to drop on the lawn or walkways, and may require occasional clean-up. It has attractive grayish green foliage edged in creamy white with hints of silver which emerges light green in spring. The glossy oval leaves are highly ornamental and remain grayish green throughout the winter. It features subtle clusters of fragrant gold flowers at the ends of the branches from late spring to early summer. The furrowed dark brown bark and brick red branches add an interesting dimension to the landscape.

Landscape Attributes

Variegated Italian Buckthorn is a multi-stemmed evergreen shrub with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its average texture blends into the landscape, but can be balanced by one or two finer or coarser trees or shrubs for an effective composition.

This shrub will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and can be pruned at anytime. It is a good choice for attracting birds to your yard. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Invasive

Variegated Italian Buckthorn is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Hedges/Screening
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens

Planting & Growing

Variegated Italian Buckthorn will grow to be about 10 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 10 feet. It tends to be a little leggy, with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 30 years. This is a dioecious species, meaning that individual plants are either male or female. Only the females will produce fruit, and a male variety of the same species is required nearby as a pollinator.

This shrub does best in full sun to partial shade. It is very adaptable to both dry and moist locations, and should do just fine under average home landscape conditions. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. This plant should not require much in the way of fertilizing once established, although it may appreciate a shot of general-purpose fertilizer from time to time early in the growing season. It is not particular as to soil type or pH, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This is a selected variety of a species not originally from North America, and parts of it are known to be toxic to humans and animals, so care should be exercised in planting it around children and pets.