








# *Aronia melanocarpa*

## **Black chokeberry**

Family: Rosaceae

						
<b>shrub</b>	<b>branch</b>	<b>leaves</b>	<b>leaves</b> with glands on upper midrib	<b>flowers</b>	<b>fruit</b>	<b>bud</b>

The black chokeberry is rising in popularity. A user friendly shrub that gives your garden year around interest.

The black chokeberry is a member of the rose family.

It tolerates partial shade (up to 50 percent) but thrives in full sun. Hardy to zone 3, it is an excellent choice for low lying wet areas where only moss and mosquitoes flourish. Yet, it can acclimate itself to dry, sandy locations.

The leaves of black chokeberry emerge a medium green. Leaves are alternate on the stems, simple, 1-3 inches in width. They are obovate in shape (oval, but narrower at the base than near the tip), with fine and regular teeth along the edges. Their upper surfaces are dark green and lustrous, with dark glands on the upper surface of the midrib. Lower leaf surfaces are lighter green. Both surfaces are glabrous (smooth). The petioles are ¼ inch or less in length. Leaves often grow only on the top 2/3 of plants. The leaves are bright green as they develop in spring, and they darken as the season progresses. In early spring the black chokeberry is a showy display of clustered white flowers. Black chokeberry flowers have five white petals, and numerous pink stamens. They open in mid – May, late enough that they are not often affected by late spring frost. Primary pollinators are small bees.

As the season progresses, the leaves turn a deep, glossy green, which brightens the plant and heightens its appeal during the dog days of summer. In mid to late summer, the berries start to develop; within two weeks many of the branches droop with heavy clusters of fruit. Ripening a purplish black, the 1/3 inch berry persists into January.

The black chokeberry is a Spring – flowering shrub. Spring – flowering shrubs produce flowers on one year old wood. Spring – flowering shrubs that sucker readily from the base benefit from thinning. You should prune these shrubs **AFTER** they have flowered in spring, but before the next year's flower buds are set. **If you prune these shrubs in winter or early spring, you will remove many of the flower buds.**

*Examples of spring – flowering shrubs are: lilacs, forsythia, viburnums, honeysuckle, chokeberry, mock orange, and weigela.*

### ***Why prune shrubs?***

Pruning is important for a variety of reasons. Pruning can help control the size of a shrub, direct growth, influence flowering or fruiting, rejuvenate old, overgrown plants, or maintain plant health and appearance. Pruning also encourages growth below the pruning cut.

**Contact your local UW Extension for more information regarding pruning.**

### ***Should you plant a Black Chokeberry?***

The black chokeberry is an adaptable shrub. It is moderately tolerant of shade and prefers moist acidic soils, although it is adaptable to a wide range of soil moisture, being found in both low wet lands and dry sandy slopes.

The black chokeberry tolerates salt spray, drought and soil compaction.

### ***Insects that cause problems to the black chokeberry***

#### Two Spotted Spider Mites

You will notice the following complications on your black chokeberry if Two Spotted Spider Mites are present.

White to yellow stippling on foliage, clusters of the mites and premature leaf drop.

You can shake the leaves over a white paper plate and identify that you have two spotted spider mites.

If you have confirmed you have the two spotted spider mite, you can do the following to help control the pest.

Physical Control– using a water hose, spray the infested leaves to dislodge some of the mites. This can also wash away their protective webbing.

Natural Control – Lady Beetles

Chemical Control - Miticides/Insecticides using an insecticidal soap.

#### Clearwing Borers

You will notice larval feeding of the clearwing borers because your plants will be wilted.

Lower parts of stems are gnarled and scarred with sawdust. Pupal cases may be found sticking out of holes in the bark in spring.

#### **Entire bush may die – Plant mortality risk: High**

Cultural Control – avoid mechanical damage to the bark, do not band trees as it has been shown to increase borer attack.

Chemical Control – spray a long lasting, broad spectrum insecticide on the trunk and limbs.

Biological Control – Parasitic Wasps

#### Snowball Aphid

You will notice signs of snowball aphid damage if you have twisted, curled, distorted and cupped leaves and shoots. Look for aphids on underside of leaves. Adult aphids are bluish gray

and bodies that appear to be dusted with white powder. You can often find ants tending the aphids.

Control is usually not suggested, but using insecticidal soapy sprays reduce the numbers.

### ***Disease that can cause problems to the black chokeberry***

Black chokeberry appears to have very few disease and pest problems.

Mildew can become a problem when plants do not receive adequate sunlight and air circulation. If you notice your leaves appear dusty and spores can be rubbed off the plant tissue on to your fingers, you may have a mildew problem.

Physical Control – increasing air circulation and light penetration will help. Shrubs should be pruned and thinned to reduce over crowding in the landscape.

When planting new shrubs, select those which have resistance to powdery mildew and allow for adequate spacing of plants.

Chemical Controls – Mildew seldom warrants chemical control. If you decide to use a fungicide, **Contact your local UW Extension for more information.**

### ***Other facts about the black chokeberry***

The black chokeberry is an amazing shrub. It has no serious stress or pests, however, rabbits and deer enjoy browsing on the black chokeberry.

It is tolerant to salt, and is tolerant of compacted, wet, and dry soils.

Reproduction is primarily by seed.

Though black chokeberry is native to eastern North America, it has been planted extensively in Europe and Asia. In Russia, Denmark and eastern Europe the fruit is widely used for juice and wine production. The Europeans have developed several varieties which are now available in the U.S. from commercial nurseries.

‘**Viking**’ is a vigorous, productive variety from Scandinavia, which can grow to a height of six feet.

‘**Nero**’ is a shorter growing variety, reaching a height of 3 to 4 feet, with dark blue berries. In the U.S. a selection from a native source in Michigan is being sold as ‘**Morton**’ black chokeberry. It is marketed in the Midwest under the trademark **Iroquois Beauty**<sup>™</sup>.

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### References

USDA - Black Chokeberry Plant Guide

UW Extension Wisconsin – How to Properly Prune Deciduous Shrubs

UW Green Bay – Shrubs of Wisconsin

University of Maine – Black Chokeberry

UW Madison –Dr. Brian Hudelson – Plant Disease

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