



WACD Plant Materials Center

BLACK HAWTHORN

Common Name: Black Hawthorn or Douglas Hawthorn

Scientific Name: *Crataegus douglasii*

Distribution: Black Hawthorn can be found throughout the state at low to middle elevations.

Growth Habit: Black Hawthorn grows as a deciduous upright tree or spreading shrub. It can reach 12 to 15 feet tall, and equally wide. Plants can grow together creating dense thickets, that are quite impenetrable due to the long thorns (up to 1 ½" long).

Adaptability: Black Hawthorn inhabits a variety of sites. It can be found growing in moist, open places, forest edges, thickets, shorelines, riparian areas, roadsides, and even upland areas.

Comments: Black Hawthorn is an excellent soil and streambank stabilizer. It is also an important wildlife species. Its dark purple berries provide food, and thickets provide nesting and brooding cover. It has also been an important species to man historically. Its berries were food, its wood used for tools, and its thorns were used for piercing ears. It has been noted that Paul Bunyan always used a big hawthorn tree as a back scratcher.

In many areas of Western Washington, Black Hawthorn is no longer the most common Hawthorn species. The cultivated European species, Common Hawthorn, or *Crataegus monogyna*, has naturalized, particularly in the Puget Sound basin. This makes accurate identification very important when collecting seeds and cuttings for propagating this species.



* Photos courtesy of Lincoln County Conservation District.