

What is a weed wrench?

A weed wrench is a manually operated, all-steel tool designed to remove woody plants by uprooting. It utilizes powerful jaws, with a gripping leverage, that are teamed for pulling. Weed Wrench is an efficient, safe, selective, permanent means of eliminating unwanted shrubs and sapling trees. Soil disturbance is minimal and desirable plants are left unharmed. Persons of ordinary strength can use it effectively after only seconds of familiarization.

How do I obtain a weed wrench?

Residents of Oakdale borrow the Weed Wrench by first calling 651-730-2740 to check its availability. There are several sizes available. Then stop by public works at 1900 Hadley to pick up the wrench by providing your name, address and telephone number.

Is there a fee to use the weed wrench?

There is no fee charged to Oakdale residents.

How long can I use the weed wrench?

The weed wrench can be used by an individual for up to one week (7 days). Residents may request additional time if a wrench is available.

How do I dispose of the removed buckthorn?

The Oakdale Public Works Department will accept the buckthorn brush for free. Residents need to deliver the brush, notify the reception desk attendant at the front of the building and unload the pile of brush into the pile out back.



City of Oakdale

Environmental Management
Commission
1584 Hadley Avenue North
Oakdale, MN 55128



Fighting Buckthorn and utilizing the Weed Wrench

For many years buckthorn was considered the ideal hedge plant. As its invasive properties became better known and documented, it fell out of favor with gardeners. Common or European buckthorn and glossy buckthorn are currently designated by Minnesota law as a restricted noxious weed, preventing its sale or transportation in the state. Furthermore, property owners are encouraged to remove it from their property.

Why is the buckthorn plant considered so invasive? Buckthorn is very hardy and is able to adapt to most soil and sunlight conditions. Its leaves remain green long after most other plants have dropped their leaves in the fall. These characteristics give buckthorn an advantage over native plants and allow it to crowd out and eliminate other plants from the landscape.

Buckthorn produces abundant berries, each containing 2 - 4 seeds. Birds eat the buckthorn fruit and then deposit the seeds. As a result, buckthorn quickly moves from pruned, well-kept yards and invades other areas. Buckthorn is taking over and crowding out our woodlots; and in the process, we are losing wildflowers, trees, and shrubs because our native species cannot compete with this aggressive, exotic shrub.

What can be done? To assist with the removal of buckthorn, the City of Oakdale has developed a weed wrench loan program. The weed wrench is a tool designed to remove the plant and its roots. It is easy to use and there are several sizes available, at no cost, for Oakdale residents to borrow for up to a week at a time.

USING THE WEED WRENCH

Placing the Jaw:

To operate the weed wrench, open the jaw until the jaw-catch engages. Place the jaws around the stem and disengage the jaw-catch by putting your foot on top of the lifter arm behind the jaw and giving the grip handle a tug. If the jaw shows any tendency to slip upward instead of gripping the stem, keep pressure with your foot on the lifter arm until the jaw is solidly clamped on.



If the plant is one that spreads at ground level and has branches interfering with good placement of the jaw, you can grab the interfering branch with the weed wrench and rip it off to gain access to the stronger stem. Or, you can use a pair of loppers or a pruning saw to get the offending part out of the way. When working with a plant that has needles or thorns it may be desirable to saw it off a few inches above ground before pulling the root; then you don't have the top stabbing you while you work the Weed Wrench.

Extracting the Plant:

Once the jaw is clamped on, give a reasonably hard pull to determine whether it's going to be an easy or hard root to extract. If it's easy, just keep pulling. If it's hard, don't try to pull it in one heroic stroke, but begin "pumping" the handle rhythmically pulling hard, then relaxing the pull. This will usually fracture the soil a little more with each pump, the ground will begin to heave, and finally you will hear a muffled "pop" deep underground when the

tap root breaks. Plants that have been cut off at ground level in previous attempts at removal may require having a little soil dug away from the stem to expose enough to grab.



Keep the Fulcrum flat on the ground:

On level ground it isn't much of an issue, but on hillsides you might be tempted

to take a pull with only one end of the fulcrum touching while you place the jaw straight on a vertical stem. Better to have the fulcrum in contact with the ground for its full width even if it means gripping the stem at an angle; it will still pull just fine. Failure to heed this will bend the fulcrum at the lifter arm, or in some cases bend the lifter arm at the fulcrum.

