

Rhamnus - Growing Guide

Growing Rhamnus Alaternus 'Argenteovariegata'

Commonly known as 'Italian Buckthorn'

This attractive evergreen foliage plant can often disappoint and die off for apparently no reason. It needs a little care and know how to get it growing well.

R. alaternus must be grown in well drained soil. Even in the nursery, in pots, it is prone to damping off and dropping all its leaves quickly when it gets overly wet and waterlogged. In the garden the same is true. The plant grows well in full sun and the splendid foliage effect can be more pronounced in partial shade but the key to success is to pick a dry spot.

This is a spreading shrub growing up to 12ft in the Mediterranean but rather less in our gardens. It can readily be clipped and shaped with no ill effect. The flowers are small, yellow green and unisexual borne in clusters near the end of the twigs in April or May. These are followed by small spherical red fruits which turn black when ripe. Despite these attributes this is really a pretty variegated border shrub or the central feature in a herbaceous border. You may find twigs that revert to pure green leaves and, as with any variegated plant, these should be cut out.

R. alaternus is perfectly hardy and reasonably easy to propagate from semi-ripe new growth cuttings in summer. Even these can quickly damp off in the mist bench where humidity levels are high.



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