

Fragrant Sumac



Fragrant Sumac (*Rhus aromatica*)

General Description

Spreading shrub with branches turning up at the tip. Tends to form a dense mass of stems and leaves. Good for bank stabilization. Fragrant aromatic leaves, particularly when crushed. Yellow catkin-like flowers.

Leaves and Buds

Bud Arrangement - Alternate.

Bud Color - Yellow, pubescent, covered by leaf scar.

Bud Size - Small.

Leaf Type and Shape - Trifoliate.

Leaf Margins - Acute to acuminate, crenate-serrate.

Leaf Surface - Hairy, pubescent.

Leaf Length - 1½ to 3 inches; leaflets 1 to 2 inches.

Leaf Width - 1½ to 3 inches; leaflets 1/2 to 1 inch.

Leaf Color - Soft green as leaflets unfold, then turning semi-glossy, deep green in summer, and yellow to red in autumn.

Flowers and Fruits

Flower Type - Polygamous or dioecious, male buds are 1 inch catkins, female are short panicles at the ends of branches.

Flower Color - Yellowish.

Fruit Type - Hairy-clustered drupes, 1/4 inch in diameter, females only.

Fruit Color - Red.

Form

Growth Habit - Ascending, branchlets pubescent, rounded mounds.

Texture - Medium, summer; medium, winter.

Crown Height - 3 to 9 feet.

Crown Width - 6 to 10 feet.

Bark Color - Gray-brown, aromatically fragrant when bruised, leaf scars circular, distinctly raised.

Root System - Fibrous, spreading.

Environmental Requirements

Soils

Soil Texture - Adapted to a variety of soils.

Soil pH - 5.0 to 7.5. Prefers acidic soils.

Windbreak Suitability Group - 1, 1K, 3, 4, 4C, 5, 6D, 6G.

Cold Hardiness

USDA Zone 4.

Water

Moderately drought tolerant.

Light

Full sun, to partial (1/2 to 3/4) shade.

Uses

Conservation/Windbreaks

Small to medium shrub for farmstead windbreaks and riparian plantings.

Wildlife

Excellent escape and nesting ground cover.

Agroforestry Products

Wood - Bark used in tanning leather and basket making.

Medicinal - Used in treating diabetes, kidney and bladder discharge, and as a diuretic and mouthwash.

Urban/Recreational

Massing, naturalizing. Fast cover for bank stabilization.

Cultivated Varieties

Green Globe Sumac (*Rhus aromatica* 'Green Globe') - Rounded, 5 to 5½ feet tall.

Gro-low Sumac (*R. aromatica* 'Gro-low') - 2 to 3½ foot ground cover, much lower growing.

Related Species

Skunkbush or Lemonade Sumac (*Rhus trilobata*)

Pest

No major pest problems.