

Smooth Sumac



Smooth Sumac (*Rhus glabra*)

General Description

A large, loose, open-spreading shrub with a flattish crown. Usually grows in masses and suckers profusely. Outstanding red fall color. Similar to Staghorn sumac but shorter.

Leaves and Buds

Bud Arrangement - Alternate.

Bud Color - Gray-brown.

Bud Size - Small, round-ovoid with leaf scar almost completely encircling the bud, pubescent.

Leaf Type and Shape - Pinnately-compound, 11 to 31 leaflets per leaf.

Leaf Margins - Leaflets are acuminate, serrate.

Leaf Surface - Smooth, glaucous beneath.

Leaf Length - 12 to 16 inches; leaflets 2 to 5 inches.

Leaf Width - 4 to 8 inches; leaflets 1/2 to 1 inch.

Leaf Color - Dark green in summer, showy red leaves in autumn.

Flowers and Fruits

Flower Type - Dioecious, borne in dense 6 to 9 inch panicles.

Flower Color - Greenish.

Fruit Type - Hairy drupe in clusters.

Fruit Color - Red or scarlet.

Special Features - Red to rusty-red fruit cluster in autumn.

Form

Growth Habit - Upright, stout, branching, forms thicket, umbrella-like canopy.

Texture - Medium-coarse, summer; medium-coarse, winter.

Crown Height - 5 to 15 feet.

Crown Width - 10 to 15 feet.

Bark Color - Branches glabrous, glaucous, brownish.

Root System - Fibrous, spreading root system, suckering habit.

Environmental Requirements

Soils

Soil Texture - Adapted to a variety of soil types.

Soil pH - 5.0 to 8.0.

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

Cold Hardiness

USDA Zone 3.

Water

Moderately drought tolerant. Available water determines mature plant height.

Light

Full sun, to partial shade.

Uses

Conservation/Windbreaks

Small to medium shrub for farmstead windbreaks and riparian plantings.

Wildlife

Excellent escape and nesting ground cover.

Agroforestry Products

Wood - Leaves and roots used in dyeing and tanning leather.

Food - Drupes eaten fresh or processed into a lemonade drink.

Medicinal - Extracts used as a tonic, astringent, and antiseptic; drupes as refrigerant and diuretic, and root bark as a tea to stop hemorrhaging.

Urban/Recreational

Massing, naturalizing. Fast cover for bank stabilization. Lends a tropical effect in landscape. Outstanding reddish fall color.

Cultivated Varieties

Cutleaf Smooth Sumac (*Rhus glabra* 'Laciniata')

Related Species

Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*)

Pests

No major pest problems. A stem wilt sometimes occurs.