

Staghorn Sumac



Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*)

General Description

A large, loose, open-spreading shrub with a flattish crown and rather picturesque branches resembling the velvety antlers of a deer, hence the name Staghorn. Borderline hardiness, may regularly freeze back in winter.

Leaves and Buds

Bud Arrangement - Alternate.

Bud Color - Gray-brown.

Bud Size - Small, hairy, leaf scars not elevated and somewhat "C" shaped.

Leaf Type and Shape - Pinnately-compound, 11 to 27 leaflets per leaf.

Leaf Margins - Leaflets are acuminate, serrate.

Leaf Surface - Very pubescent or velvet-like when young, including petiole and rachis, glaucous beneath.

Leaf Length - 1 to 1½ feet; leaflets 2 to 4½ inches long.

Leaf Width - 4 to 9 inches; leaflets 1 to 1½ inches.

Leaf Color - Medium green, orange to red autumn color.

Flowers and Fruits

Flower Type - Dioecious, borne in dense, hairy 6 to 12 inch panicles.

Flower Color - Greenish-yellow.

Fruit Type - Densely hairy drupes packed in a pyramidal cluster.

Fruit Color - Red or crimson.

Form

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

Texture - Coarse, summer; coarse, winter.

Crown Height - 10 to 15 feet.

Crown Width - 10 to 20 feet.

Bark Color - Branches velvety and hairy concealing the lenticels, larger stems develop rough darkened bark.

Root System - Fibrous, spreading.

Environmental Requirements

Soils

Soil Texture - Adapted to a variety of soil types.

Soil pH - 4.5 to 7.5, but prefers acidic soils.

Windbreak Suitability Group - 1, 3, 4, 4C, 5.

Cold Hardiness

USDA Zone 3. However, stem dieback often occurs.

Water

Slightly less drought tolerant than Smooth Sumac.

Light

Full sun, to partial shade.

Uses

Conservation/Windbreaks

Medium or large shrub for farmstead windbreaks and riparian plantings.

Wildlife

Excellent escape and nesting ground cover.

Agroforestry Products

Wood - Roots and inner bark used as a dye.

Food - Sumac lemonade made from berries.

Medicinal - Some *Rhus* species are used as tea for internal disorders, mouthwash, and constipation.

Urban/Recreational

Massing, naturalizing. Fast cover for bank stabilization.

Cutleaf cultivars are most ornamental for landscaping.

Cultivated Varieties

Shredleaf Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina* 'Dissecta') - Finer-textured, lacy, fern-like leaves.

Cutleaf Staghorn Sumac (*R. typhina* 'Laciniata') - Similar to above.

Related Species

Smooth Sumac (*Rhus glabra*)

Pests

No major pest problems.