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Native Trees and Shrubs for Maine Landscapes

Staghorn Sumac

(Rhus typhina)

Developed by Marjorie Peronto, associate Extension professor, University of Maine Cooperative Extension; and Reeser C. Manley, assistant professor of horticulture, University of Maine.

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Go native!

This series of publications is the result of a five-year research project that evaluated the adaptability of a variety of native trees and shrubs to the stresses of urban and residential landscapes in Maine. Non-native invasive plants pose a serious threat to Maine's biodiversity. Plants such as Japanese barberry, shrubby honeysuckle, and Asiatic bittersweet, originally introduced for their ornamental features, have escaped from our landscapes, colonizing natural areas and displacing native plants and animals. By landscaping with native plants, we can create vegetation corridors that link fragmented wild areas, providing food and shelter for the native wildlife that is an integral part of our ecosystem. Your landscape choices can have an impact on the environment that goes far beyond your property lines.

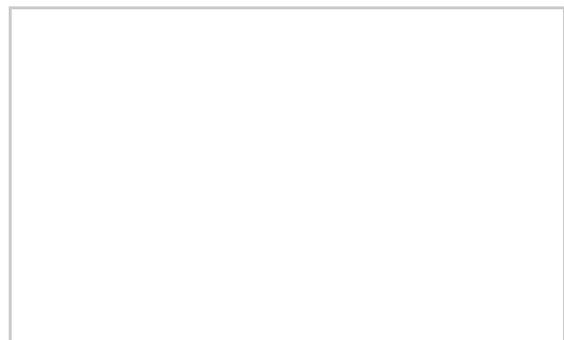
Description

Form: an irregular and open shrub or small tree with crooked, leaning trunks and leggy branches; forms large colonies

Size: 35 to 50 feet high and wide

Ornamental characteristics:

- dense, pyramidal spikes of bright red,



velvety berries from mid August to late March

- fall foliage of golden yellow, orange, and red
- picturesque winter branches with stout stems, covered with dark brown, velvety hairs



Photo by Reeser C. Manley

Landscape Use

In the wild, staghorn sumac grows along sunny forest edges or in open fields, forming large colonies of either male or female plants. While often forming pure stands, it can also be found growing with chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), black cherry (*P. serotina*), viburnums (*Viburnum* spp.), and hawthorns (*Crataegus* spp.). In coastal areas, it is commonly found with bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*) and wild rose (*Rosa virginiana*).

Difficult to manage in small garden spaces, this aggressive shrub or small tree is best naturalized along the woodland edge or otherwise used where frequent mowing or paving will control its spread. Avoid planting *Rhus typhina* in shady or wet areas.

The showy, pyramidal spikes of deep red fruits are borne only on female plants. Purchasing plants in fruit will ensure that this feature is a part of your landscape.



Photo by Reeser C. Manley

Culture

Hardiness: USDA zone 3a

Soil requirements: tolerant of a wide variety of soils

Light requirements: full sun

Stress tolerances:

soil compaction—intolerant

pollution—somewhat tolerant
deicing salts—tolerant
urban heat islands—tolerant
drought—tolerant
seasonal flooding—intolerant

Insect and disease problems: infrequent



Wildlife Value

Staghorn sumac provides nectar for several butterfly species, including banded and striped hairstreaks. It is also a larval host of spring azure butterfly. The colorful fruits persist into late winter and serve as emergency food for many species, including turkeys, bluebirds, robins, catbirds, and others. The tree colonies also provide nesting and shelter sites for many bird species.

Maintenance

Irrigation: During the establishment period, defined as one year after planting for each inch of trunk diameter at planting time, water your trees regularly during the growing season. Give the root zone of each tree 1 inch of water per week; in general, a tree's root zone extends twice as wide as its canopy. After the establishment period, provide supplemental irrigation during periods of severe drought.

Fertilization: Landscape trees and shrubs should not be fertilized unless a soil test indicates a need. Correct soil pH, if necessary, by amending the backfill soil. No nitrogen fertilizer should be added at planting or during the first growing season.

To learn more about native woody plants

Visit the Eastern Maine Native Plant Arboretum at University of Maine Cooperative Extension's Penobscot County office, 307 Maine Avenue in Bangor. Established in 2004, the arboretum displays 24 different native tree and shrub species that can be used in managed landscapes.

Reviewed by Cathy Neal, Extension professor, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension.

Photos by Reeser C. Manley.

Illustration by Margery Read, Extension master gardener.

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