



Skunkbush Sumac

Rhus aromatica var. trilobata

Sumac Family (Anacardiaceae)

Zones: 4-7

Full Sun to Partial Shade

Low Water

Location: Childrens' Garden, Floral Walk, Four Seasons Garden, Fragrance Garden, Water-Wise Garden

Skunkbush Sumac is a native, drought tolerant and ecologically diverse shrub. It ranges from the bottom of desert canyons up to rocky ledges and rim rock; from riparian zones to madrean woodlands; it is also found in grasslands and ponderosa pine forests. This range displays its tolerance for a wide variety of conditions. Homeowners also are finding it preferable due to its ease of maintenance, including its low water needs and how well it responds to pruning. This shrub is also great for riparian areas, as it has a wide spreading root system that stabilizes soil and reduces erosion.

It is visually pleasing throughout the spring and summer, with especially stunning attributes in the fall. It usually grows between 6-10 ft in height, and equally wide. In spring, small yellow-green flowers emerge. Its leaves are 3-7 cm long, trifoliate and alternate. When bruised, the leaves produce a pleasant citrus aroma. Leaves start out green with maroon colored margins, gradually turning entirely green and ending in the fall with striking red, orange and yellow colors.

This bush produces small, fuzzy red clusters of berries that ripen from June to September. These have a lemony flavor and it has been suggested that it produces a refreshing beverage when added to a bottle of water during a hike. This bush has been used by Native Americans in the dyeing process, to weave baskets, as a tobacco substitute, and as a source of food.