



Oakleaf 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, Water-Wise Garden

The *Rhus aromatica* is a native shrub that grows in a wide variety of soil types and plant communities. It ranges from the bottom of desert canyons, to rocky ledges and rim rock; from riparian zones to madrean woodlands, grasslands, and ponderosa pine forests. It is well adapted to drought conditions, responds well to pruning, and makes a wonderful addition to your xeric landscape. Growing 6-10 feet high and equally wide, this shrub is great for riparian areas, as its wide-spreading root system stabilizes soil and reduces erosion.

In spring, this deciduous shrub produces small yellow-green flowers. The leaves emerge green with maroon colored margins, gradually turning completely green. Then, in the fall, the leaves turn with striking red, orange and yellow colors. The bruised leaves produce a strong smell that resembles the scent of a skunk, which is where it has received one of its common names: skunk bush. The fruit actually produces a pleasant citrus aroma and lemony flavor, and makes for a refreshing beverage when added to a bottle of water during a hike. The pubescent, red berries ripen from June to September. Native Americans used this shrub extensively in the dyeing process, to weave baskets, as a tobacco substitute, and as a source of food.