Fact Sheet ST-568
October 1994

Rhus copallina
Shining Sumac[1]

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INTRODUCTION

Winged Sumac is well-suited to natural and informal landscapes where the underground runners spread to provide dense, shrubby cover for birds and wildlife (Fig. 1). This species is the best of the sumacs for ornamental planting because of its lustrous dark green foliage which turns a brilliant orange-red in fall. The fall color display is frequently enjoyed along interstate highways, as the plant readily colonizes these and other disturbed sites. The tiny, greenish-yellow flowers, borne in compact, terminal panicles, are followed by showy red clusters of berries which persist into the winter and attract wildlife.

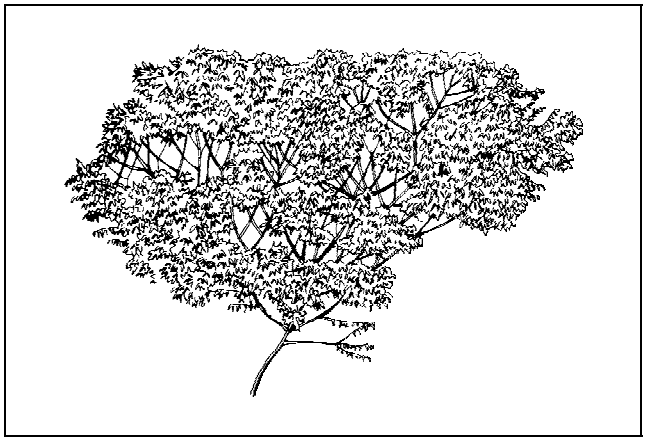

Figure 1. Middle-aged Shining Sumac.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Rhus copallina*
Pronunciation: roose kop-al-EYE-nuh
Common name(s): Shining Sumac, Winged Sumac
Family: *Anacardiaceae*
USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 10 (Fig. 2)
Origin: native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; reclamation plant; specimen; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 12 to 18 feet
Spread: 12 to 18 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: round; upright
Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: medium
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: odd pinnately compound
Leaflet margin: entire
Leaflet shape: elliptic (oval); oblong; ovate
Leaflet venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaflet blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-568, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.

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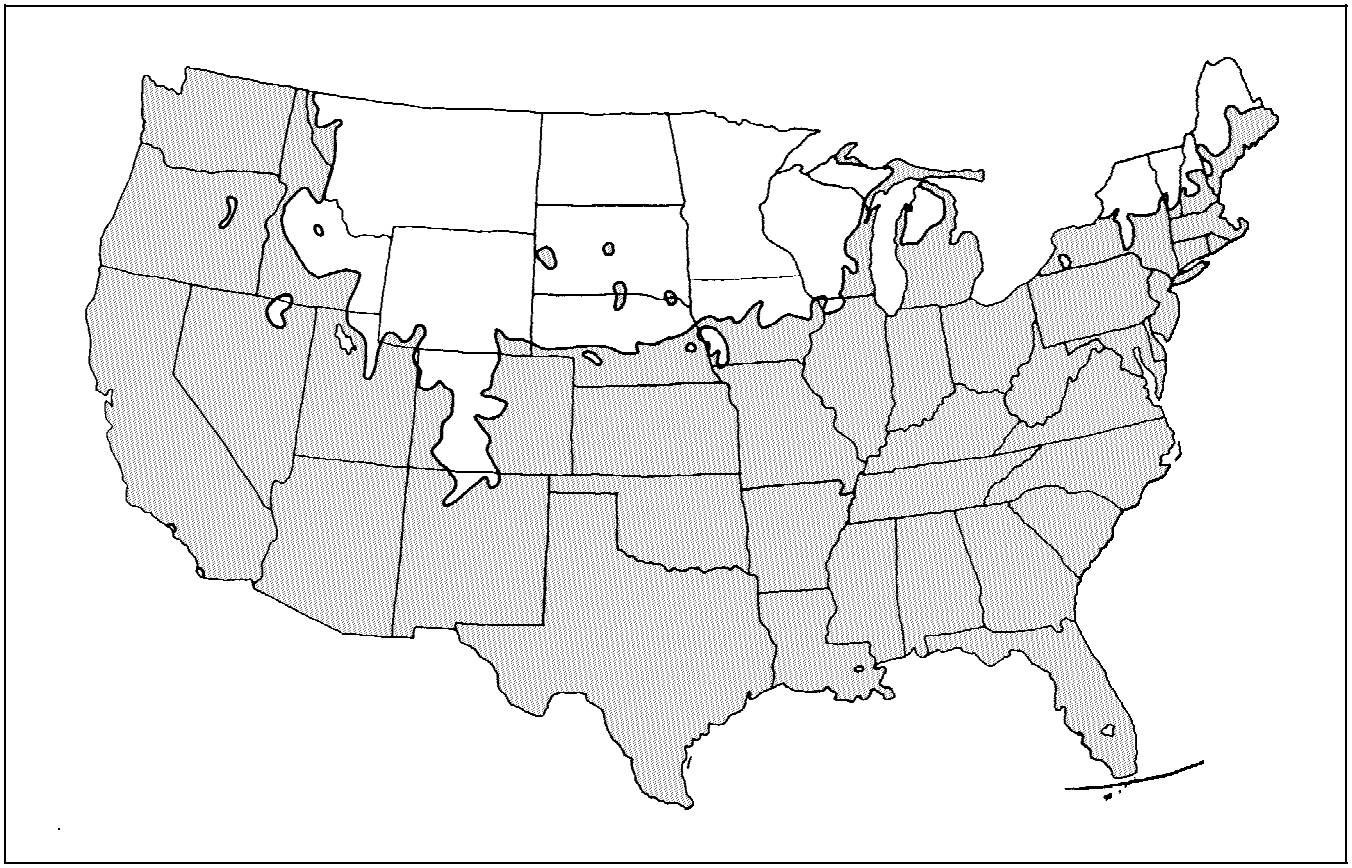

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Fall color: orange; red
Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow
Flower characteristics: showy; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: < .5 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: red
Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns
Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: brown; reddish
Current year twig thickness: medium; thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: seeds itself into the landscape
Ozone sensitivity: sensitive or moderately tolerant
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible
Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

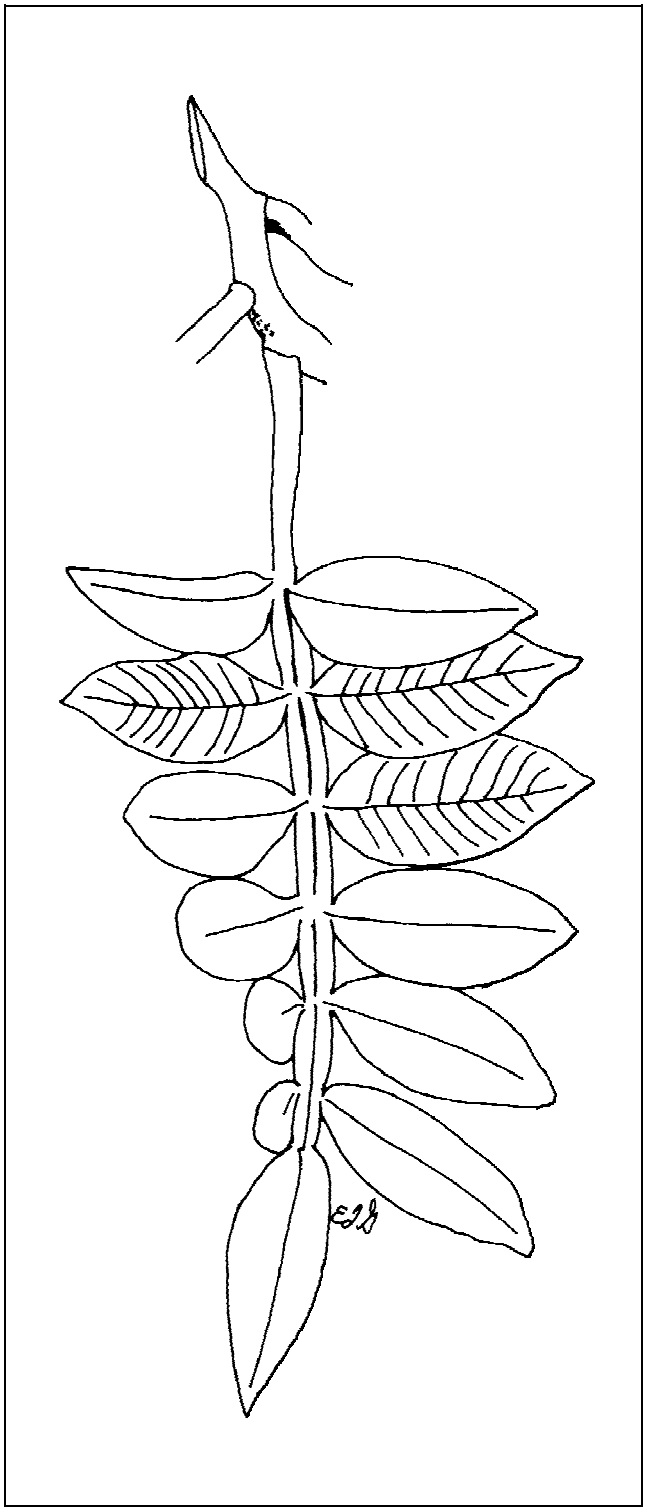

Figure 3. Foliage of Shining Sumac.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Winged Sumac grows well on dry, sandy soils in full sun to part shade and requires little care. It is best used as a component of a shrub border, where its deciduous habit adds interest to an evergreen landscape. This makes a good roadside plant due to its drought tolerance and seasonal interest. It has not been widely used as a specimen or small tree but with some trianing and pruning makes a nice small tree located in a groundcover or near the deck or patio in a home landscape. Seasonal pruning would be needed to eliminate suckers and root sprouts.

Propagation is by division of the suckers.

Pests

No pests are of major concern.

Aphids suck plant juices. Aphids may be dislodged with a high pressure water spray from the garden hose.

Scales can usually be controlled with horticultural oil.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

Several fungi cause cankers leading to dieback. Fertilize to keep plants healthy and prune out infected parts.

Fusarium wilt infects roots, causing the leaves to droop and wilt. A light infection causes only gradual dwarfing or yellowing and premature red leaf coloration.

A leaf spot causes gray spots with purplish margins that merge, giving the leaves a scorched appearance.

Various genera of powdery mildew-forming fungi form a white coating on the leaves.

Verticillium wilt causes wilting of individual stems, followed by death of the foliage. Eventually the entire plant dies. Prune out infected branches. Do not replant in the same spot with sumac or other susceptible plants.