

## SOUTHERN ARROWWOOD

*Viburnum dentatum* L.  
Plant Symbol = VIDE

Contributed by: USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center & the Biota of North America Program



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### Alternate Names

Arrow-wood viburnum, southern arrow-wood, roughish arrow-wood. (Arrowwood is frequently hyphenated: arrow-wood.) The common name refers to the Native American use of the straight young stems as arrow shafts.

### Uses

**Landscape:** *V. dentatum* is an adaptable native, multi-stemmed shrub. Creamy white flowers, dark blue berries and colorful fall foliage make southern arrowwood an attractive landscape plant. It suckers freely from the base. It can be used for borders or screens or as mass plantings and groupings to attract birds, which eat the fruit.

**Medicinal:** Viburnum species have been used for numerous medicinal purposes (Alternative Medicine Foundation: HerbMed, 2000--for notes and internet links on medicinal use and other health related topics for *Viburnum* species).

### Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

### Description

Southern arrowwood is a native shrub growing 3-9 feet tall and spreading sometimes up to 8 feet. The plant's arching branches form an overall rounded crown; twigs are slender, ridged and angled. Its leaves are deciduous, opposite, simple, oval to oblong, obovate (inversely egg-shaped), or elliptic in shape and 1½ - 4 inches in length, with coarsely, but regularly, toothed margins. Leaves are shiny dark green above and paler beneath, sparsely stellate (with hairs in small star-like tufts) on undersides and petioles. Foliage turns yellow to red or reddish-purple in late fall. Small white flowers are borne in 2 to 4-inch flat-topped clusters in May to early June. The ¼ inch berry-like drupes are bluish-black and attractive to wildlife. Fruiting occurs from August - November.

Localized variations of southern arrowwood occur over the geographic range of the species. Most common differences between the variants are in the shape and size of leaves, the type and placement of pubescence (hairs) on the leaf underside and petioles, and the region of occurrence. Some variations of southern arrowwood include *V. dentatum* var. *dentatum*; *V. dentatum* var. *scabrellum* Torr. & Gray (= *V. scabrellum* (Torr. & Gray) Chapm.) and *V. dentatum* var. *venosum* (Britt.) Gleason.

### Adaptation and Distribution

Southern arrowwood is found natively in open woods and margins, and along streambanks. It prefers loamy, neutral to acid soil with ample moisture, but is adaptable to a range of conditions from dry to fairly wet soil. Plants are salt-tolerant in New England coastal areas. They can grow in generally drier conditions than *V. acerifolium*. They most commonly occur in partial shade but can be grown in full sun.

Southern arrowwood is distributed throughout the East. For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

### Establishment

Southern arrowwood plants are propagated by seed or vegetatively. Seed bearing age begins at approximately 3-4 years. Depending on region of collection, the seeds of *V. dentatum* may have a cold requirement for breaking embryo dormancy. Vegetative reproduction is through short rhizomes

and sprouts from the root crown or softwood cuttings. Southern arrowwood has a fibrous root system and is easily transplanted.

### **Management**

*V. dentatum* is free from serious problems of disease or most insect pests (see, however, discussion on viburnum leaf beetle below). Occasional pruning is helpful to rejuvenate and shape the plant. Prune off basal suckers to restrict spreading if necessary.

### **Pests and Potential Problems**

The viburnum leaf beetle (*Pyrrhalta viburni*) was introduced from Europe and Asia to North America around 1947. It became a problem in Canada in 1978 and has now moved to the northeastern United States where it is a concern in urban landscapes and nurseries. *Viburnum dentatum* leaves can be damaged or skeletonized by the beetle adults and larvae, though *Viburnum opulus* (European cranberrybush viburnum) appears to be the insect's preferred host and is most seriously affected. The beetle larvae hatch in early May, feed for about 4-5 weeks then pupate in the soil. Adults emerge by mid-July, feed, mate, and females lay over-wintering eggs in a straight line on viburnum twigs. If found, the eggs should be pruned out and destroyed before hatching. Chemical control is best applied to young larvae, which feed on both upper and lower leaf surfaces.

### **Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)**

Several cultivars of *V. dentatum* are available.

### **Prepared By:**

*Guy Nesom*

Formerly BONAP, North Carolina Botanical Garden,  
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North  
Carolina

*Kathy Davis*

USDA-NRCS National Plant Materials Center,  
Beltsville, Maryland

### **Species Coordinator:**

*Gerald Guala*

USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center, Baton  
Rouge, Louisiana

Edited: 26Jul2002 JLK; 060818 jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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