

***Rhus glabra* L.**

Smooth sumac

Anacardiaceae (Sumac Family)

USDA Symbol: **RHGL**

USDA Native Status: Native to U.S.



The colony-forming smooth sumac is a 10-20 ft. shrub with short, crooked, leaning trunks and picturesque branches. The pinnately compound leaves are alternate, with 13-30 sharp-toothed leaflets on each side of the midrib. Deciduous leaves become extremely colorful in early fall. On female plants, yellow-green flowers are followed by bright-red, hairy berries in erect, pyramidal clusters which persist throughout winter.

The only shrub or tree species native to all 48 contiguous states.

PLANT CHARACTERISTICS

Duration: Perennial

Habit: Shrub

Leaf Retention: Deciduous

Leaf Arrangement: Alternate

Leaf Complexity: Pinnate

Leaf Shape: Lanceolate

Leaf Venation: Pinnate

Leaf Margin: Serrate

Breeding System: Flowers Unisexual , Dioecious

Size Notes: Shrub or small tree to 10 feet.

Leaf: Green

Autumn Foliage: yes

Fruit: Red, Brown 1/8 inch

Size Class: 6-12 ft.

BLOOM INFORMATION

Bloom Color: White , Yellow , Green , Brown

Bloom Time: May , Jun , Jul , Aug

DISTRIBUTION

USA: AL , AR , AZ , CA , CO , CT , DC , DE , FL , GA , IA , ID , IL , IN , KS , KY , LA , MA , MD , ME , MI , MN , MO , MS , MT , NC , ND , NE , NH , NJ , NM , NV , NY , OH , OK , OR , PA , RI , SC , SD , TN , TX , UT , VA , VT , WA , WI , WV , WY

Canada: AB , BC , MB , NB , NS , ON , PE , QC , SK

Native Distribution: Across most of Canada except the far north and almost all of the US, south into Tamaulipas in northeastern Mexico

Native Habitat: Roadsides; fields; wood borders; waste places

USDA Native Status: L48(N), CAN(N)

GROWING CONDITIONS

Water Use: Low

Light Requirement: Sun , Part Shade , Shade

Soil Moisture: Dry

Soil pH: Circumneutral (pH 6.8-7.2)

CaCO3 Tolerance: Low

Cold Tolerant: yes

Soil Description: Most dry soils. Sandy, Sandy Loam Medium Loam, Clay Loam, Clay, Caliche type

Conditions Comments: This is the dominant sumac of blackland prairies. Plants of Rocky Mountain origin are usually separated into the variety *cismontana*. This dwarf variety is becoming popular in cultivation. In a planned landscape, the species is most effective when drifts or colonies, typical of natural settings, are allowed to establish. Colonies can be rejuvenated every few years by cutting them to the ground in mid-winter. Sumacs will grow in dry waste areas, such as impossible slopes where even junipers struggle. They are fast growing, generally pest and disease-free, and drought-tolerant. Colonies are often single-sexed, formed from a single, suckering parent. Only female plants produce flowers and berries.

BENEFIT

Use Ornamental: The seeds remain firmly attached for a long time without noticeable deterioration and are often used in large decorative arrangements.

Use Wildlife: Consumed by birds of many kinds and small mammals, mainly in winter. Deer browse the twigs and fruit throughout the year.

Use Food: Raw young sprouts were eaten by the Indians as salad. The sour fruit, mostly seed, can be chewed to quench thirst or prepared as a drink similar to lemonade.

Use Medicinal: Boiled fruit as a remedy for painful menstruation and blood diarrhea. Diuretic. Roots and berries steeped to make wash for sores. Internal as a tea and externally as a wash for female complaints. (Kindscher)

Use Other: Roots make yellow dye. Mixed with tobacco to smoke. (Kindscher)

Conspicuous Flowers: yes

Attracts: Birds , Butterflies

Larval Host: Hairstreak butterfly

VALUE TO BENEFICIAL INSECTS

Special Value to Native Bees
Special Value to Honey Bees
Provides Nesting Materials/Structure for Native Bees
Supports Conservation Biological Control

This information was provided by the Pollinator Program at [The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation](#).

PROPAGATION

Propagation Material: Seeds

Description: Plant scarified and stratified seed 1/3-3/4 in. deep. Sumac is most commonly propagated by early winter root division. Place root cuttings in flats of moist sand.

Seed Treatment: Acid scarify one to three hours, then stratify immediately for 30 days at 41 degrees.

Commercially Avail: yes

SOURCE: http://wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=RHGL