

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS

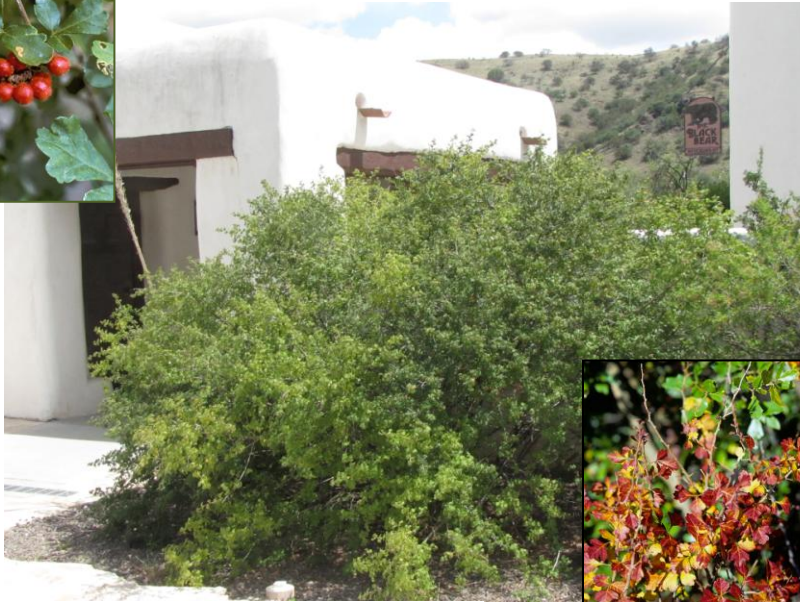
Lindheimer Chapter

PLANT OF THE MONTH AUGUST, 2013

FRAGRANT SUMAC, *RHUS AROMATICA*



Leaf and Fruit Detail

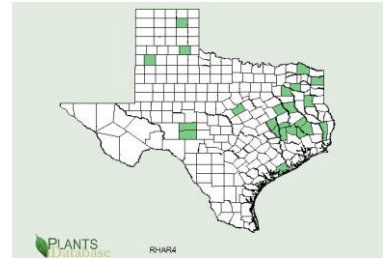


Fragrant Sumac at Indian Lodge, Davis Mtns.

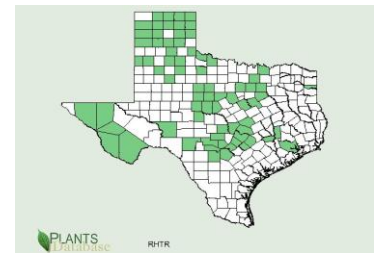
Fragrant Sumac – Fall color



USDA Range Map: Texas



Rhus aromatica



Rhus trilobata

Fragrant Sumac is a 6' to 12' spreading shrub with fragrant foliage which some people find pleasant while others do not. This has led to several other common names such as Aromatic Sumac and Skunkbush. Regardless of one's opinion on the foliage, the plant is undeniably colorful in the Fall when the leaves turn shades of red, orange, yellow and even purple. This makes it an interesting and underused landscape plant.

Fragrant Sumac (*R. aromatica*) occurs from Texas east to the Atlantic and north to Canada. From western Texas to the Pacific there is a very similar shrub, known as *Rhus trilobata*, which some botanists consider a variety of *R. aromatica*. Both are quite variable in size and shape. Regardless of the botanical or common name, Fragrant Sumac generally occurs in dry areas in sunny to partly shady locations. It has small, fragrant yellow flowers in the spring before the leaves develop. These are followed by tart red berries that are a favorite of many kinds of birds and small animals. When soaked in water and sweetened with sugar, the berries yield a lemonade-like drink, leading to another common name: Lemon Sumac.

Like other Sumacs, Fragrant Sumac can form thickets, which makes it ideal for a hedge or screen. Since berries only occur on female plants, it is best to plant a known specimen if these are desired. Fall color and fruit occur best when planted in full sun. Sumacs are generally avoided by deer.