

# *Rhus copallina*: Shining Sumac<sup>1</sup>

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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. 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 *Rhus copallina*: shining sumac  
Credits: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Rhus copallina*

**Pronunciation:** roose kop-al-EYE-nuh

**Common name(s):** shining sumac, winged sumac

**Family:** *Anacardiaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5A through 10B (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Invasive potential:** weedy native

**Uses:** specimen; reclamation; container or planter; highway median; urban tolerant

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

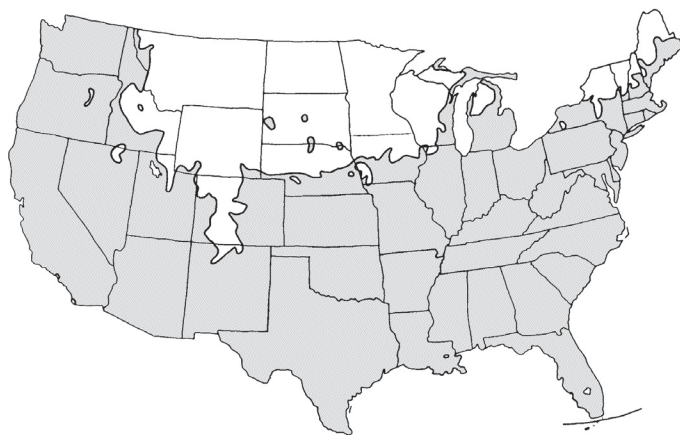


Figure 2. Range

## Description

**Height:** 12 to 18 feet

**Spread:** 12 to 18 feet

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**Crown uniformity:** irregular  
**Crown shape:** upright/erect, round  
**Crown density:** moderate  
**Growth rate:** moderate  
**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** odd-pinnately compound  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** ovate, oblong, elliptic (oval)  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** red, orange  
**Fall characteristic:** showy

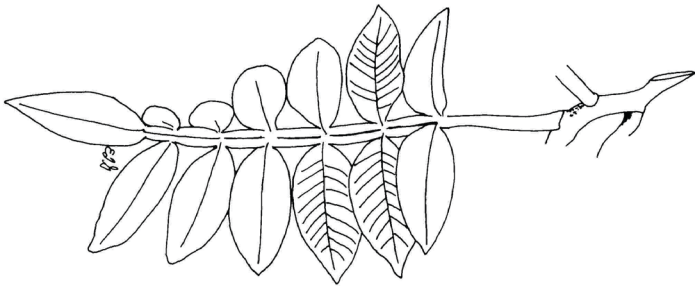


Figure 3. Foliage

## Flower

**Flower color:** yellow  
**Flower characteristics:** showy



Figure 4. Flower

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round  
**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** red

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure  
**Breakage:** resistant  
**Current year twig color:** reddish, brown  
**Current year twig thickness:** medium, thick  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun, or partial shade  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; acidic; slightly alkaline; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** unknown

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no  
**Outstanding tree:** no  
**Ozone sensitivity:** sensitive  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible  
**Pest resistance:** free of serious pests and diseases

## 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 training 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.