



BWSR Featured Plant

Name: Nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*)

Plant Family: Caprifoliaceae

Statewide Wetland
Indicator Status:
Great Plains – FACU
Midwest – FAC
N. Cent. N. East – FAC



*Flat-topped flower clusters
and finely serrated leaves*

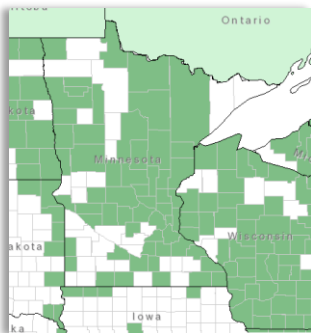
Nannyberry is a shrub that is both beautiful and versatile. This shade-tolerant, woody plant has flat topped white flowers, fruit that is used by a wide variety of birds and wildlife, and vibrant fall color. Frequently used as a landscaping plant, it is successful as a tall barrier and wind break. Its ability to function as both a small tree and multi-stemmed shrub and ability to adapt to many environmental conditions makes it well suited to buffer planting and other soil stabilization projects.

Identification

This native shrub can be identified by its pointed buds, unique flowers, and fruit. Growing to around twelve feet tall in open habitats, the species commonly produces suckers and multiple stems. The newest branches are light green in color and glabrous and buds narrow to a point. With age, the branches become grey, scaly and rough. The egg-shaped leaves are simple and opposite with tips abruptly tapering to a sharp point. Leaf surfaces are shiny, dark green and hairless with reddish finely serrated margins. Fall color is a vibrant dark red. Numerous dense, flat-topped flower heads appear and bloom from May to June. Flowers are creamy white and bell to saucer-shaped. The flowers develop into elliptical berry-like drupes that turn a blue-black color from July to August. The sweet and edible fruit is used by a variety of wildlife species but has a wet wool odor when decomposing, thus its alternate name – Sheepberry.



Multi-stemmed growth form



*Range based on University
of MN Herbarium data.*

Range

Viburnum lentago is common through most of Minnesota and is winter-hardy to Zone 4. Outside of Minnesota it can be found in the Northeast from New Brunswick and Quebec, Canada to Colorado and Virginia in the United States. Its natural habitat includes rocky, mesic, and low woodlands along streams or swamp borders, thickets, roadsides and fence rows.



*Berry-like drupes
of Nannyberry*

Uses

This easily established, adaptable shrub works well for soil stabilization in swales, floodplains, and along stream banks. With attractive flowers and fall color, Nannyberry can add an interesting dimension to gardens and native plantings. It is also a good species to plant after buckthorn removal. Honeybees, Andrenid bees, Syrphid flies, and other pollinators are attracted to the nectar and pollen of the flowers, while a wide variety of birds and wildlife eat the dark blue berries and nest in the branches. Humans generally find the taste unsatisfactory and barely palatable.

Primary Uses:

- Landscape Plantings
- Wildlife Habitat
- Buffer Plantings

Planting Recommendations

Planting can be accomplished with seed, cuttings, or containerized plants. Nannyberry transplants and spreads easily by the prolific amount of suckers and drupes it produces. The single seed in each drupe needs alternating temperatures and a cool, wet period to break dormancy. Planting in late fall can allow the seed to break dormancy over winter. Cuttings can be taken from the plant during dormancy and planted directly into the soil and the species is available as bare root and containerized plants from nurseries. It should be planted in soils that will stay moist, as it does not do well in dry soils.

Planting Methods

- Seed
- Cuttings
- Hanging branches root where ground contacts

Similar Species



Many species in the Viburnum family have similar features to Nannyberry such as *Viburnum opulus* var. *americanum* (High bush cranberry) (left) and *Viburnum rafinesquianum*, (Downy Arrow-wood Viburnum) (right) *Viburnum opulus* var. *americanum* has leaves with three lobes and fruit with red fall color while *Viburnum rafinesquianum* has larger teeth on its leaves than Nannyberry and fruit that is dark blue like Nannyberry. (Image by Minnesota Wildflowers).

References

Trees and Shrubs of Minnesota by Welby R. Smith

USDA Plants Database: http://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs_vile.pdf

http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_vile.pdf

Illinois Wildflowers: <http://www.illinoiswildflower.info/trees/plants/nannyberry.html>

Minnesota Wildflowers: <http://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/shrub/nannyberry>

Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden: www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org/pages/plants/nannyberry.html