

May 2018 Plant of the Month

Basketbush Sumac, Fragrant Sumac

Rhus aromatica

Plant Form: Deciduous Shrub

Water Use: Low

Mature Size: 5-6 ft. tall x 6-8 ft. wide

Exposure: Full Sun, Part Shade

Bloom Time: Spring (Mar-May)

Native to: California, western U.S, Canada to Mexico
(below 7500 feet)

Hardiness: Cold Hardy to -15°F

Basketbush Sumac is a tidy shrub with arching stems and dense leaves that appears much too lush to be found in dry desert habitats. This extremely cold-tolerant plant is a non-irritating, non-poisonous relative of poison oak, which it somewhat resembles. Known as Basketbush Sumac for its traditional use in basketry, it is also called Fragrant Sumac due to the scent of its crushed leaves. Its leaf shape inspired a third name, Three-leaf Sumac. This moderately fast-growing California native spreads by rhizomes to form a thicket. It has tiny, yellowish flowers in spring, producing clusters of red fruits on female plants. After retaining deep green foliage all summer, its leaves often turn orange or red in autumn before falling for winter dormancy. The tart, edible red berries (actually hard drupes) are eaten by birds. Use this surprisingly tough, lovely plant for borders, screens, windbreaks, hedges, mass plantings, on slopes, or in any areas with poor, dry soils.



awac

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