

Viburnum rufidulum: Rusty Blackhaw¹

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Introduction

A native of the well-drained, upland woods of southeastern North America, Rusty Blackhaw forms a multiple or (occasionally) single-trunked small tree or large shrub, reaching 25 feet in height with an equal spread. The dark bark is blocky, resembling older Flowering Dogwood bark. Trunks usually grow no thicker than six inches and arch away from the tree, forming a pleasing, vase-shaped crown. Leaves are dark green, three inches long, leathery, and extremely glossy. The tree is covered in springtime with striking five-inch-wide clusters of small, white blooms. These flowers are followed by clusters of dark blue, waxy, one-half-inch-long fruits that are extremely popular with wildlife and will occasionally persist on the plant from September throughout the autumn, if not eaten by wildlife. In fall, Rusty Blackhaw puts on a brilliant display of scarlet red to purple foliage.

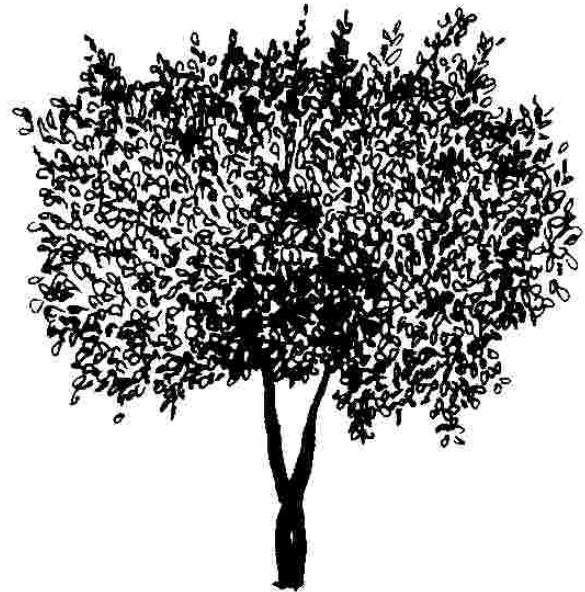


Figure 1. Mature *Viburnum rufidulum*: Rusty Blackhaw

General Information

Scientific name: *Viburnum rufidulum*

Pronunciation: vye-BER-num roo-FID-yoo-lum

Common name(s): Rusty Blackhaw, Southern Blackhaw

Family: *Caprifoliaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 9B (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: sidewalk cutout (tree pit); reclamation; container or planter; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; specimen; hedge; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn 3-4

feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median

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

Description

Height: 20 to 25 feet

Spread: 20 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: vase

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

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Figure 2. Range

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrulate

Leaf shape: ovate, obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: red, purple

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: blue

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: thin, medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade, shade tolerant

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: yes

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

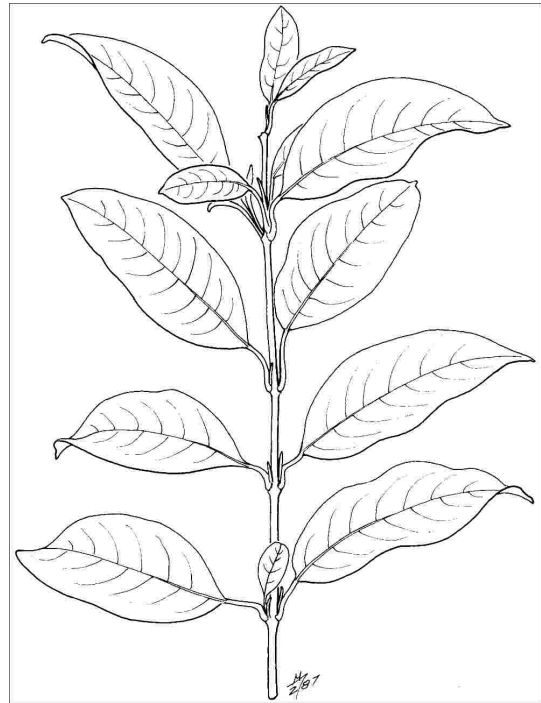


Figure 3. Foliage

Use and Management

Rusty Blackhaw will grow and look nice in full sun or partial shade on any reasonably fertile, well-drained soil. The tree grows in a shady spot but forms a more open habit. Flowering is significantly reduced in the shade. Although tolerant of drought, it will not tolerate compacted soil. This would be a good tree for planting beneath power lines and in other limited space areas. Useful as a hedge, specimen, or border tree, this deciduous tree adapts well to urban areas. Shoots arise from the root system, sometimes as far out as the dripline. This could be a maintenance problem when planted in a bed of mulch. But sprouts would be routinely cut with regular mowing when planted as a street tree in a lawn. Pests are usually not a major problem.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests

This tree is usually pest-free. Viburnum aphid is gray to dark green and feeds in clusters at the tips of the branches, causing leaf curl. *Viburnum opulus* is especially susceptible. The insects can be dislodged with high pressure water spray from the garden hose.

Inspect the stems of unhealthy-looking plants for possible scale infestations. If found, spray with horticultural oil for some control.

Diseases

Bacterial leafspot causes round, water-soaked spots on leaves and young stems. These develop into shrunken, brown areas about 1/8-inch in diameter. Destroy infected leaves, if you wish. This is not a problem to be concerned about.

Bacterial crown gall forms galls on the lower stems. Do not replant in the same spot.

Shoot blight causes grayish to brown decayed spots on the leaves. The spots first appear at the leaf margins, then spread to the rest of the leaf. Infected flower clusters or twigs are killed.

A number of fungi cause leaf spots. Rake up and destroy infected leaves. These are usually not a serious problem.

Powdery mildew causes a white powdery growth on the leaves, but this *Viburnum* is usually not affected.