

Rhus lanceolata: Prairie Flameleaf Sumac¹

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Introduction

Prairie flameleaf sumac forms a loose, spreading small tree, reaching up to 25 feet in height. Most specimens only grow to about 12 to 18 feet tall. The shiny, pinnately compound leaves change to a brilliant orange, red, or yellow in the fall before dropping. The yellowish-white, summertime flowers appear in 6- to 10-inch-long and wide, terminal panicles and are quite showy. The hairy fruits which follow are orange/red and mature in October.



Figure 1. Young *Rhus lanceolata*: Prairie flameleaf sumac.
Credits: UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Rhus lanceolata*

Pronunciation: roose lan-see-oh-LAY-tuh

Common name(s): Texan sumac, prairie flameleaf sumac, prairie sumac

Family: *Anacardiaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 6B through 8B (Figure 2)

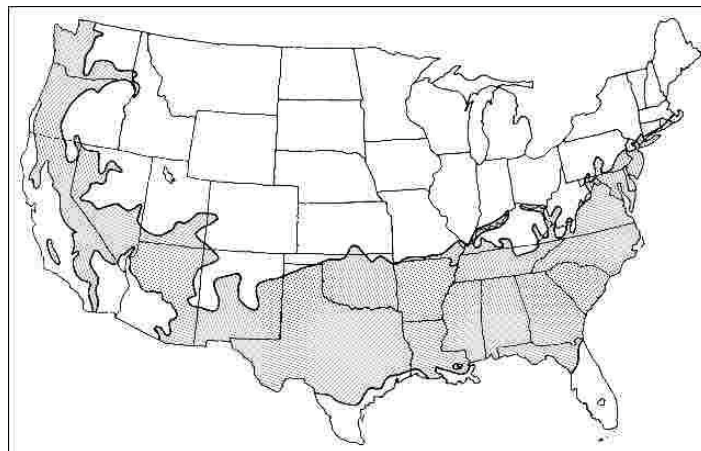


Figure 2. Range.
Credits: UF/IFAS

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: not assessed/incomplete assessment

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Uses: reclamation; highway median; container or planter; specimen

Description

Height: 12 to 20 feet

Spread: 15 to 20 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: upright/erect, oval

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: odd-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: ovate, oblong, lanceolate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: orange, red

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than 0.5 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: brown, reddish

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; alkaline; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

Training is required to make this large shrub into a tree. Begin by staking the main stem in the upright position for a year or two and develop branches beginning at two to four feet from the ground. Space branches 8 to 12 inches apart and be sure that they form a wide angle with the trunk. This will help ensure that they are well attached to the tree. Occasional pinching or heading back of the terminal shoot and branches will increase branching. Suckers from the base of the trunk may have to be removed periodically to maintain a neat appearance.

Place Texan sumac in a prominent location in the landscape in the full sun. It is a nice tree for planting in a low ground cover to display the interesting trunk and branch arrangement. The fine-textured foliage, showy flower display and bright fall color combine to make this small tree suitable for increased usage in southern landscapes.

Sumac should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil, acid or alkaline. This tree is often found on limestone or clay soils with a high soil pH in its native habitat, but it also grows on acidic soil. It would be well suited for inclusion in a low maintenance landscape where plants receive little if any irrigation. Too much irrigation and fertilization can lead to plant decline.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests and Diseases

There are no serious pests or diseases as long as plants are not overwatered.