



Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Rhus lanceolata

Educating people about the environmental necessity, economic value, and natural beauty of native plants

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Common name

Flame-leaf sumac, Prairie lanceleaf sumac

Range

Found on limestone and in calcareous soil from north-central Texas to the eastern range of the Edwards Plateau, and west to Trans-Pecos and New Mexico.

Bloom period

Late summer to early fall

Growth habit

A shrub or small tree up to 30 feet high. During the summer, clusters (panicles) of whitish, yellow or cream-colored flowers bloom, followed by bright red to rust-colored berries. These are set off against the glossy green leaves that later turn bright orange and red. Sumacs thrive in the poorest of soils and tolerate extremes of heat, cold, and drought.

Soil preference

Limestone soils

Exposure

Sun to partial shade

Propagation

Several species of *Rhus* are commercially available, and are usually more successfully established than plants dug from the wild. The best time for planting most shrubs and trees is during the dormant period of fall and winter. Even during the winter, however, the root ball needs moisture, so plan some winter watering if soaking rains fail to come regularly.

You can use a spade to cut outer shoots from a spreading cluster in the wild. This allows the plant to remain in its natural setting while providing transplantable shoots that already have a developed root system. Simply cut straight down between the outside "sucker" shoots and the other plant and then cut around the new shoots to remove them



from the soil. Keep the roots wrapped in damp newspaper and out of the sun. Replant the same day, if possible. As with any shrub or tree, native or introduced, the first year requires regular deep watering for successful root establishment. Once established, sumacs do not require fertilizing or watering beyond average rainfall.

R. lanceolata can also be started from scarified seed kept in a moist medium, such as perlite, in the refrigerator for two months. It is best planted in early spring.

Miscellaneous

Sumacs provide texture and vivid fall color as well as hardiness and easy maintenance. It is an excellent landscaping choice.