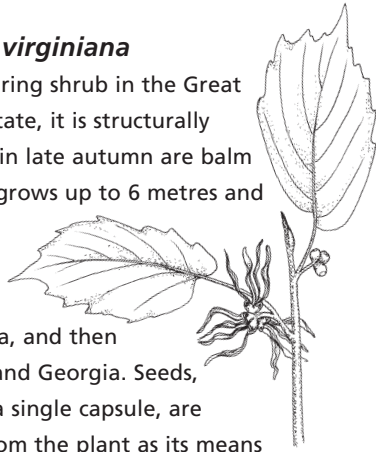


Witch-hazel *Hamamelis virginiana*

Witch-hazel is the latest flowering shrub in the Great Lakes region. In its denuded state, it is structurally interesting; its yellow flowers in late autumn are balm for the soul. A large shrub, it grows up to 6 metres and spreads as much laterally. It is a plant for a larger garden.

But what a plant it is, ranging from Nova Scotia to Minnesota, and then south to Missouri, Tennessee and Georgia. Seeds, held in separate chambers in a single capsule, are literally shot several metres from the plant as its means to disperse the progeny. Grows in sun or shade.



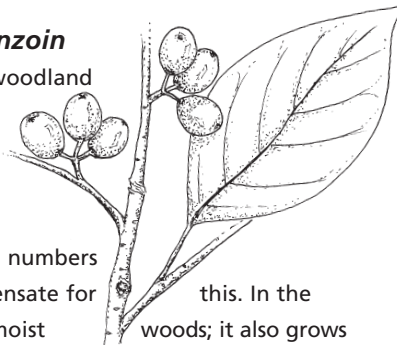
Canada elderberry *Sambucus canadensis*

This is a delightful, underused shrub. It is found throughout the southern half of the Great Lakes region, in cool, moist-to-wet situations. Its full range is Nova Scotia to southeast Manitoba and south to Oklahoma and Georgia. (*Sambucus pubens*, or red-berried elder, ranges farther north.) It grows 2 to 4 metres in height and bears many fragrant cymes of white flowers in early summer. The fruit — juicy, purple-black, berry-like drupes — is a treat for birds and squirrels in late summer. In the wild, it is found by stream banks or in river valleys. Under cultivation, it is not particular about soil, and grows in sun or shade.

Spicebush *Lindera benzoin*

To see the understorey of a woodland in spring, with spicebush all a-flower, is a sight to cherish. This shrub is one every gardener should have.

Each flower is small, but the numbers of flowers more than compensate for this. In the wild, spicebush is found in moist woods; it also grows in sunny conditions. The leaves, if rubbed, emit a pleasant fragrance. It has red berries in late summer. Spicebush is vase-shaped and can grow to 3 metres. It is a rapid grower once established. Ranges into southern Michigan and southern Ontario. Birds and squirrels eat the berries.



Black chokeberry *Aronia melanocarpa*

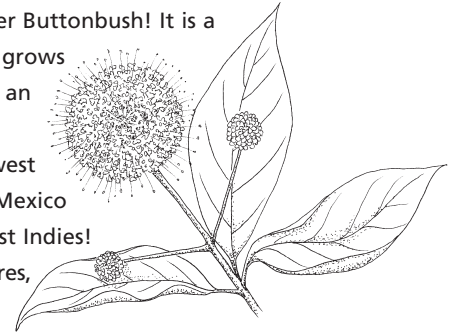
A low to medium-sized shrub, 2.5 metres high. Its habitat is varied: from wet woods through sandy or rocky ridges. Ranges from Newfoundland west to Minnesota, and south to northern Georgia. The flowers are white, 5-parted and are held in stalked clusters. In autumn the fruit is a purple-to-black pome (fleshy fruit). Buds are an interesting dark red, and are appressed against the twig or branch, an appealing characteristic. Leaves turn a reliable scarlet in autumn. Grows in sun or shade.

Nannyberry *Viburnum lentago*

Nannyberry is a large suckering shrub, and is one of the first to flower and leaf out in spring. In a delightful act of symmetry, it is one of the last to provide leaf colour — a wonderful blend of yellow through burgundy — in late autumn. Flowers are terminal clusters, white, sweet-scented. Over the course of the summer, blue-black drupes form and ripen, and are eaten by squirrels and birds. Ranges from southwestern Quebec to southeastern Saskatchewan, and south to Colorado and Georgia. Grows in sun or shade.

Buttonbush *Cephalanthus occidentalis*

Do you have a reliably wet spot in your garden or on your property? Then consider Buttonbush! It is a large, spreading shrub, and grows to 3 metres in height. It has an extensive range: from Nova Scotia to Minnesota, southwest to California, and south to Mexico and Florida, even in the West Indies! The flowers are perfect spheres, whitish, consisting of many tubes. Butterflies love the flowers. The spheres metamorphose to seedheads come autumn. Birds such as Goldfinches will consume the seeds. Prefers sun.



Sumac *Rhus species*

Sumac in fall: the glory of the field and verge. Leaf colour: red, red, red! Staghorn sumac *Rhus typhina* has a velvety leaf. Smooth sumac *Rhus glabra* has a smooth leaf. Winged sumac *Rhus copallina* has shiny green leaves turning to a shining scarlet in autumn; along the leaf midrib are “wings” connecting adjacent leaflets. All Sumacs have male and female flowers borne on separate shrubs. The female ones turn a dusky red-to-burgundy in autumn. Birds and squirrels eat the fruits. A lemon-like beverage may be made from the fruit. The range of Staghorn sumac is Nova Scotia to Minnesota, and south to Iowa and North Carolina. Prefers sun.

Tom Atkinson is a field naturalist and gardener living in Toronto, ON.

References

Forest Plants of Northern Ontario, by Karen Legasy & Shayna LaBelle-Breadman, ISBN 1-55105-064-1

Michigan Trees, by Burton V. Barnes and Warren H. Wagner, Jr., ISBN 0-472-08018-0

The New Ontario Naturalized Garden, by Lorraine Johnson, ISBN 1-55285-200-8

Shrubs of Ontario, by James H. Soper & Margaret Heimburger, ISBN 0082-5093