Viburnum sieboldii ‘Seneca’
‘Seneca’ Siebold Viburnum

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

INTRODUCTION

Most often grown as a large multi-trunked shrub or small tree, Siebold Viburnum only reaches about 20 feet high (occasionally to 30 feet) and 10 feet wide, creating an upright silhouette with short, firm branches (Fig. 1). The two to six-inch-long by 1.5 to 3-inch-wide, dark green leaves give off a pungent odor when crushed, and have been known to give an occasional autumn display of red or purple color although typically there is no fall color. In late May, the plant is covered with three to six-inch-diameter clusters of off-white, tiny blossoms. These blooms are followed by small, half-inch, pinkish-red fruits which ripen to dark blue or black from August to October, and are held above the foliage, making them an easy target for the birds who find them a delectable treat. There are extremely showy for a period of about two weeks. The cultivar ‘Seneca’ has very firm fruits which are not eaten by birds and provide for a much longer fruit effect than the species. It is preferred over the species because of the extended fruiting effect.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Viburnum sieboldii ‘Seneca’
Pronunciation: vye-BER-num see-BOLE-dee-eye
Common name(s): ‘Seneca’ Siebold Viburnum
Family: Caprifoliaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 7 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: hedge; wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 20 to 30 feet
Spread: 10 to 12 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: upright
Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: medium

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**Viburnum sieboldii ‘Seneca’ -- ‘Seneca’ Siebold Viburnum**

**Texture:** coarse

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)
- **Leaf type:** simple
- **Leaf margin:** crenate; serrate
- **Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); obovate
- **Leaf venation:** bowed; banchidodrome; pinnate
- **Leaf type and persistence:** broadleaf evergreen; evergreen; fragrant
- **Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches
- **Leaf color:** green
- **Fall color:** no fall color change
- **Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

- **Flower color:** white
- **Flower characteristics:** showy; spring flowering

**Fruit**

- **Fruit shape:** oval
- **Fruit length:** < .5 inch
- **Fruit covering:** fleshy
- **Fruit color:** black; red
- **Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

**Trunk and Branches**

- **Trunk/bark/branches:** routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; no thorns
- **Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure
- **Breakage:** resistant
- **Current year twig color:** gray
- **Current year twig thickness:** thick

**Culture**

- **Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerance: poor

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible
Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Best used as a specimen or patio tree where there is plenty of soil space for root expansion. Provides nice scale to a small landscape but is also suited for planting in mass or on 15 to 25-foot centers along a boulevard or entrance road to a commercial landscape. The multi-trunks twist as they grow providing a nice formal Oriental effect.

Siebold Viburnum should be grown in full sun or partial shade on moist, well-drained soils, acid or alkaline. Leaves will show evidence of scorch if soil dries out, but this appears to be a drought avoidance mechanism causing little permanent damage.

Propagation is by cuttings which root easily.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.