



Rhus chinensis Chinese Sumac¹

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INTRODUCTION

Chinese Sumac forms a loose, spreading small tree, reaching up to 25 feet in height (Fig. 1). Most specimens only grow to about 12 to 15 feet tall. The shiny, pinnately compound, five inches long 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.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Rhus chinensis*

Pronunciation: roose chih-NEN-sis

Common name(s): Chinese Sumac

Family: *Anacardiaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 8A (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; reclamation plant; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

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

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 20 feet

Spread: 15 to 20 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: round

Crown density: moderate

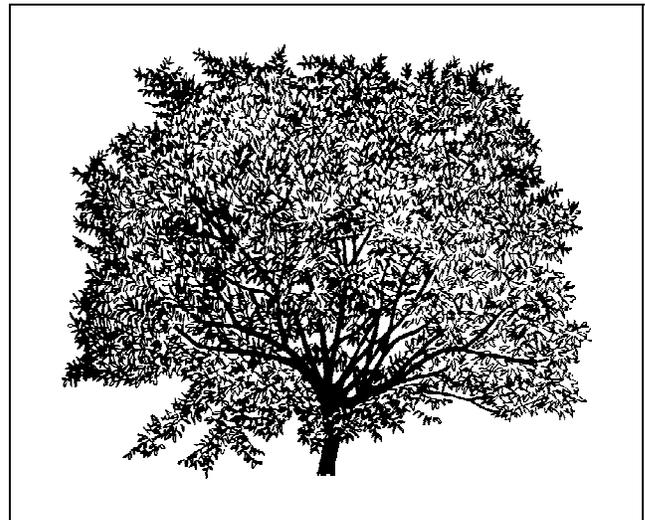


Figure 1. Middle-aged Chinese Sumac.

Growth rate: medium

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: odd pinnately compound

Leaflet margin: crenate; serrate

Leaflet shape: elliptic (oval); oblong; obovate; ovate

Leaflet venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaflet blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: orange; red

Fall characteristic: showy

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: showy; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: < .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: orange; red

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break

Current year twig color: brown; reddish

Current year twig thickness: stout; thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

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: No entries found.

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

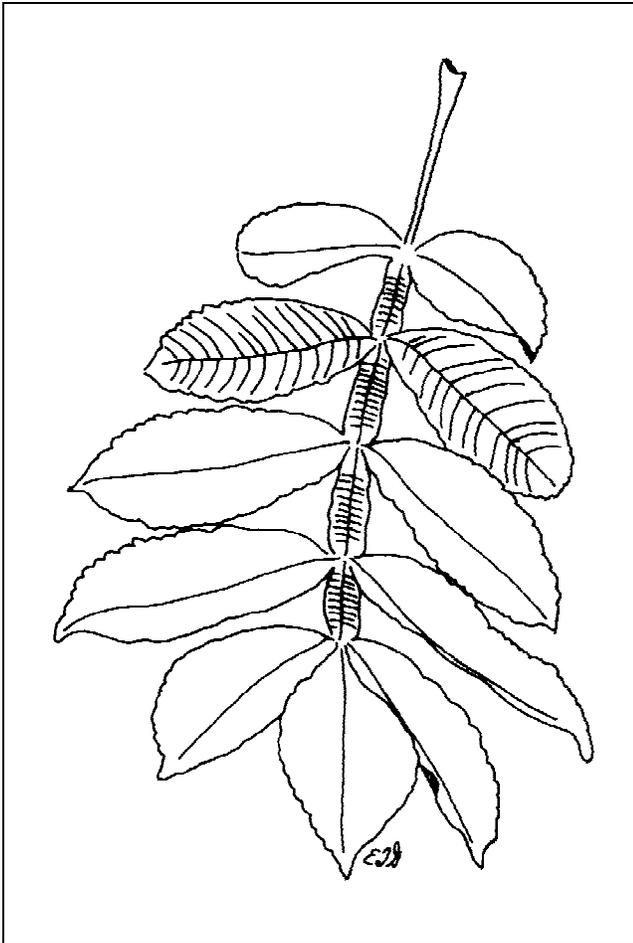


Figure 3. Foliage of Chinese Sumac.

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 will increase branching.

Place Chinese 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.

Chinese Sumac should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil, acid or alkaline. It would be well suited for inclusion in a low maintenance landscape

where plants receive little if any irrigation. Suckers from the base of the trunk may have to be removed periodically.

Propagation is by seed.

The cultivar 'September Beauty' has a nice shape and provides reliable yellow-orange fall color.

Pests

Aphids suck plant juices, but they can be easily controlled. Aphids may also be dislodged with a high pressure water spray from the garden hose.

Scales can be partially controlled with dormant oil applied in the spring before plants begin to grow.

Diseases

Several fungi cause cankers leading to dieback. Fertilize to keep plants healthy and prune out infected parts.

Fusarium wilt infects roots, causing the leaves to droop and wilt. A light infection causes only gradual dwarfing or yellowing and premature red leaf coloration.

Leaf spot causes gray spots with purplish margins that merge, giving the leaves a scorched appearance.

Various genera of powdery mildew forms a white coating on the leaves.

Verticillium wilt causes wilting of individual stems, followed by death of the foliage. Eventually the entire plant dies. Prune out infected branches. Do not replant in the same spot with sumac or other susceptible plants.