



## *Rhus lanceolata* Texan Sumac<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

Texan Sumac forms a loose, spreading small tree, reaching up to 25 feet in height (Fig. 1). 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.

### 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 8 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** 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; reclamation plant; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

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

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 12 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 20 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** oval; upright

**Crown density:** moderate

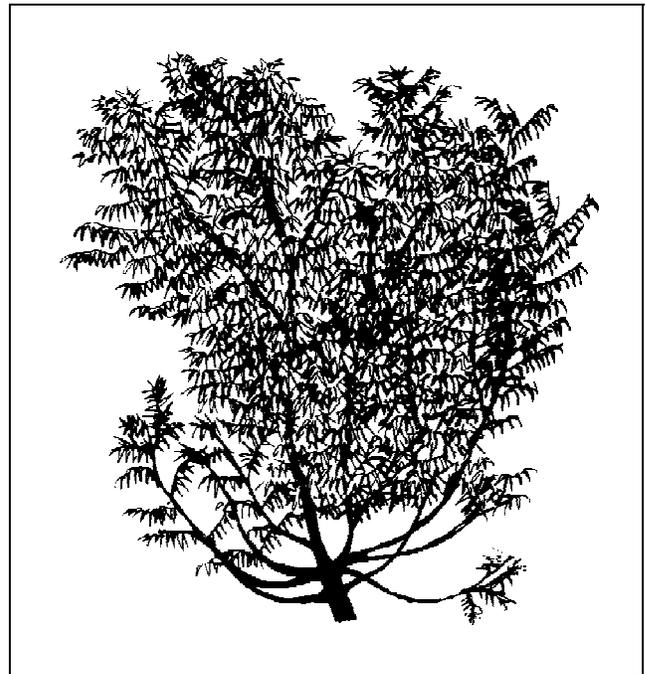


Figure 1. Young Texan Sumac.

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** odd pinnately compound

**Leaflet margin:** entire

**Leaflet shape:** lanceolate; oblong; ovate

**Leaflet venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaflet blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-569, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** orange; red  
**Fall characteristic:** showy

#### Flower

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

#### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round  
**Fruit length:** < .5 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** red  
**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; 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:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown; reddish

**Current year twig thickness:** medium; thick

#### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; 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:** seeds itself into the landscape

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible

**Pest resistance:** no pests are normally seen on the tree

## **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.