



Viburnum odoratissimum var. *awabuki* Awabuki Sweet Viburnum¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

Large, leathery, medium to light green, highly lustrous leaves and clusters of extremely fragrant, small, white flowers, completely covering the plant in springtime, make Awabuki Sweet Viburnum a plant with great potential (Fig. 1). The shiny leaves are quite distinctive from the dull, dark green, blunt-tip leaves of the species. For some reason, the species has fallen out of favor as a small tree in recent years, but it is often used as a screen or clipped hedge. Its dense, spreading, evergreen habit makes Sweet Viburnum suitable for use as a small tree, reaching only about 15 to 20 feet at maturity, with an open, multibranched, rounded canopy. The flowers are often followed by small, showy red berries which are highly ornamental and turn black when ripe. This is a small tree which should be tried, and some nursery operators are beginning to grow it. Thirty-year-old plants grow to about 18 feet tall and wide.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Viburnum odoratissimum* var. *awabuki*

Pronunciation: vye-BER-num
oh-duh-ruh-TISS-ih-mum variety aw-wah-BOO-kee

Common name(s): Awabuki Sweet Viburnum

Family: *Caprifoliaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; hedge; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized

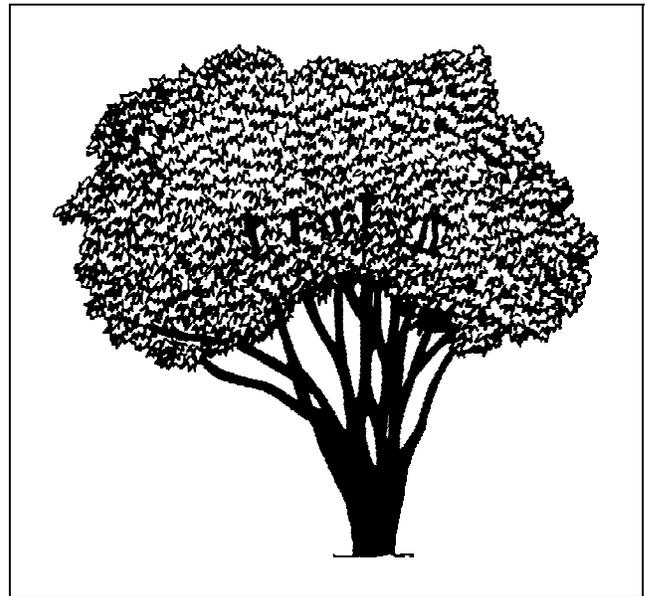


Figure 1. Mature Awabuki Sweet Viburnum.

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; screen; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

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

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-660, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 20 feet
Spread: 15 to 20 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms
Crown shape: round
Crown density: dense
Growth rate: slow
Texture: coarse

Foliage

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

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: < .5 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: black; 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; no thorns
Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure
Breakage: resistant

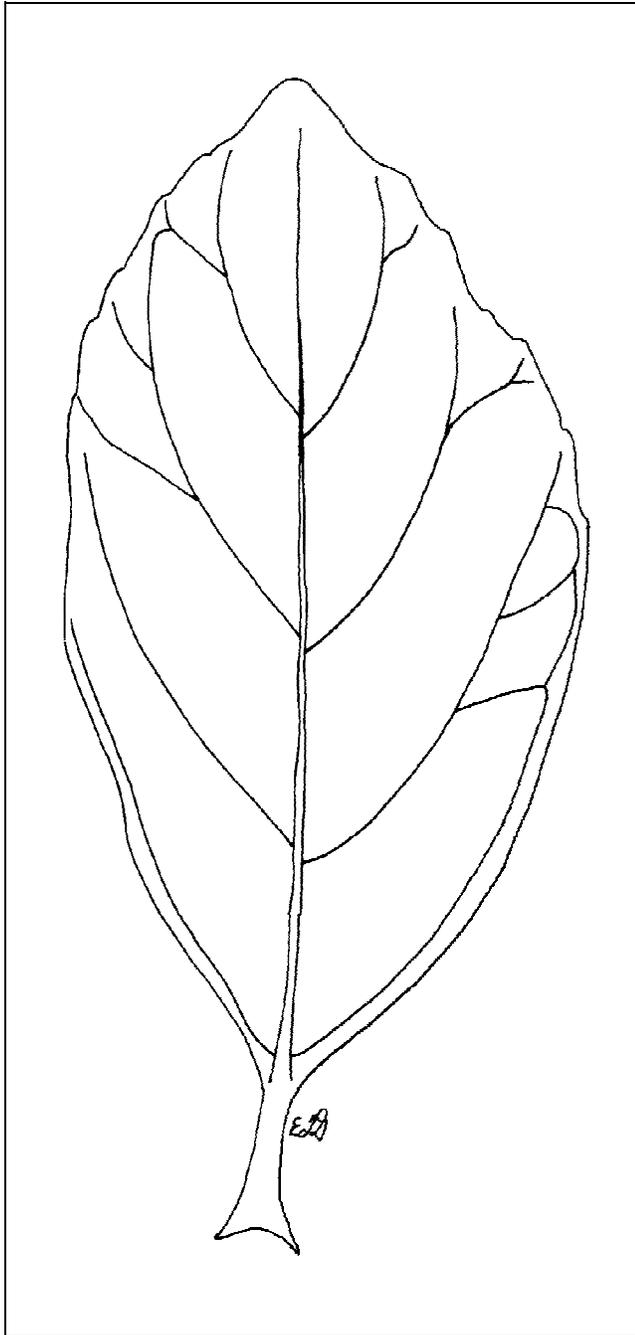


Figure 3. Foliage of Awabuki Sweet Viburnum.

Current year twig color: green
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
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: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Sweet Viburnum grows quickly in full sun or partial shade on a wide variety of soils. Relatively maintenance-free, Sweet Viburnum grown as a tree will require only occasional pruning to control size and shape. This would be a good tree for planting along a street where power lines or other obstructions limit overhead space.

The cultivar 'Emerald Lustre' has larger leaves and 'Nanum' is a dwarf form.

Propagation is by cuttings or layerings.

Pests

This tree is usually free of pests.

Viburnum aphid is gray to dark green and feeds in clusters at the tips of the branches, causing leaf curl. The insects can be dislodged with high pressure water spray from the garden hose.

Inspect the stems of unhealthy-looking plants for possible scale infestations. If found, spray with horticultural oil for some control.

Caterpillars eat holes in the new foliage. This may be more troublesome in the nursery than in the landscape.

Thrips, mites, white-fly, bagworms, and sooty mold are also problems, but none are normally serious.

Diseases

Bacterial leafspot causes round, water-soaked spots on leaves and young stems. These develop into shrunken, brown areas about 1/8-inch in diameter. Destroy infected leaves.

Bacterial crown gall forms galls on the lower stems. Do not replant in the same spot.

Shoot blight causes grayish to brown decayed spots on the leaves. The spots first appear at the leaf margins, then spread to the rest of the leaf. Infected flower clusters or twigs are killed.

A number of fungi cause leaf spots. Rake up and destroy infected leaves.

Downy mildew and powdery mildew cause a white powdery growth on the leaves.