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#761 *Viburnum dentatum*

Common Names: arrow-wood, southern arrow-wood, arrow-wood viburnum

Family: **Caprifoliaceae** (honeysuckle Family)

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Description

Arrow-wood is a deciduous shrub (potentially a small tree) with slender trunk(s) and arching branches. This is a small, rounded *Viburnum* that usually gets no more 6-10 ft (1.8-3 m) tall with a similar spread. Arrow-wood usually has multiple trunks and expands its domain by sending up new shoots from underground runners. The lustrous dark green leaves are opposite, a little sandpapery to the touch, and coarsely toothed along the margins. A prominent lateral vein terminates at the tip of each marginal tooth. The leaves are oval and usually 2-3 in (5-7.7 cm) long. Arrow-wood blooms in mid-spring with showy flat topped clusters of little creamy white flowers. The flowers are about an eighth-inch across and the clusters are 3-4 in (7.7-10 cm) across. To this writer the flowers smell faintly like inner tubes! (Sorry.) The bluish black fruits (1-seeded drupes) are ovoid in shape, a little less than a half-inch long, and the clusters can be quite showy. They are bitter to the taste. The leaves ignite with warm shades of yellow and red in autumn. Arrow-wood is a variable species throughout its natural range. The botanists have named several naturally occurring varieties and the horticulturists have named several ornamental selections.



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Plant an arrow-wood viburnum and serve the birds in your neighborhood delicious blue-black berry treats each autumn.

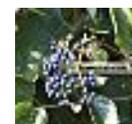
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The viburnums are similar to the dogwoods (*Cornus*) in that most members of both genera are deciduous shrubs with opposite leaves and tiny whitish flowers in rounded, flat-topped clusters. (Some dogwoods, such as Flowering dogwood, *Cornus florida*, are easily recognized because of the large showy bracts that surround the tiny flowers, but most dogwoods can be confused with viburnums.) Viburnum flowers always have five petals and dogwood flowers always have four. And if you carefully pull a dogwood leaf in two lengthwise, the two parts will tend to stay connected by the threadlike strands of the leaf veins. Viburnums don't do this.

Location

Arrow-wood is native to eastern North America from New Brunswick to Minnesota and south to eastern Texas and northern Florida. It occurs in mesic woods, usually growing in the understory of mixed hardwood forests of oaks, magnolias, maples, hickories, American beech and the like. Arrow-wood grows on both poorly drained and well drained soils.

Culture

Arrow-wood is one of the most care-free viburnums to grow. The only maintenance usually needed is to keep it in check (mowing works) because it will spread by suckering.

Light: Arrow-wood thrives in partial shade and in full sun.

Moisture: Arrow-wood is able to tolerate drought once it is established.

Hardiness: USDA Zones 3 - 8.

Propagation: Viburnum seeds are difficult to germinate because they have a required period of dormancy and hard seed coats. Under the best of conditions, arrow-wood seeds will take a year to germinate. Clean seeds thoroughly, removing all traces of the fleshy pulp, sow them in potting medium or soil, and leave them outside until you forget about them. (If you don't forget about them they may never germinate!) Arrow-wood is fairly easy to propagate vegetatively from green-wood cuttings taken in summer.



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Usage

Arrow-wood is a dainty but durable little shrub that befits the naturalistic woodland garden, or a mixed shrub border. Fall colors can be quite impressive and the birds relish the showy blue-black fruits. Arrow-wood can tolerate quite a bit of shade, and thrives in the filtered light under large oaks or tall pines. Arrow-wood responds well to pruning and can be kept at any desired size. It also can be pruned to a central leader, to make an elegant little tree. You can expect arrow-wood to flower every spring, but you may not get many fruits if you have only one

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Arrow-wood is native to much of the eastern United States. It is a great shrub for poorly drained soils but also does well on drier sites.

plant. Many viburnums exhibit self-incompatibility, which means that they cannot pollinate themselves. To get fruits, you need two different *seedling* plants

- two vegetative clones of the same plant will not suffice.

Features

Native Americans made arrow shafts from the strong sucker shoots of arrow-wood.

There are some 200 species of *Viburnum* in North America, Europe and Asia. Most are shrubs, and many are popular ornamentals, cultivated for their showy flowers, rich autumn colors and wildlife values.

[Steve Christman](#) 8/10/00; updated 8/11/03, 9/22/03, 10/15/04

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