

## Arrow-wood



*Viburnum dentatum* is a deciduous shrub generally listed in the *Caprifoliaceae* or honeysuckle family, however some taxonomists have found evidence that viburnums should be placed in the *Adoxaceae* or elderberry family and some references do classify them as such. Arrow-wood is composed of several different varieties (polymorphic). The species of arrow-wood that occurs in our area is *Viburnum dentatum* var. *scabrellum*.

Arrow-wood grows in a variety of habitats including poorly drained riverine areas, stream banks, and bogs, as well as drier, well drained, upland woodlands and pine flatwoods. *Viburnum dentatum* var. *scabrellum* occurs in Florida from Hernando County northward to southwest Georgia, and westward to eastern Texas.

It has a multi-trunked habit, similar to wax myrtle, and attains a mature height of 9 to 12 feet. It will generally produce suckers that will eventually spread to form a thicket.

The leaves are opposite, simple, and ovate with the occasional lance shaped leaf. They are generally 2 - 3 inches wide and 3 - 4 inches long. The leaf margins are dentate, or toothed, and the tips of the teeth may be sharply pointed or blunt. The leaves have distinctive lateral leaf veins and the upper and lower surfaces of the leaves have a rough surface. The leaves may turn yellow, orange or purple in the fall.

Round topped clusters of small white flowers appear in the late spring - mid-May to early June in Central Florida. The individual flowers have five petals with five protruding stamens. The flowers provide a nectar source for many different insects including bees and wasps.

The fruit contains one seed and is oval in shape. It is green when immature and turns to blue-black at maturity, which generally occurs in the summer. It is consumed by a variety of wildlife including songbirds, game birds, and mammals.

Arrow-wood's ability to grow in a wide variety of habitats make it an excellent choice for the home landscape. Not only is it very adaptable, it also provides showy spring blooms, beautiful summer fruit, attractive fall color and food for wildlife. Arrow-wood can be planted in the home landscape in masses, hedges, borders, or as individual specimens. Arrow-wood grows best in part-shade with ample moisture until it is established. It generally does not require watering once it is established unless it is located in the full sun then it may become stressed during periods of drought unless it is located in a moist area. Pruning is not necessary in order to maintain dense growth.

The easiest form of propagation is by the use of cuttings because the seeds take as long as three years to germinate. Four to six inch semi-hardwood cuttings taken in the fall will produce the best results because the mature portion of the stem contains adequately stored food reserves which help to manufacture new roots. Root cuttings may also be obtained if there are suckers at the base of the plant.

by Sharon LaPlante

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