
Wildflower Spot – April 2014
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

POSSUMHAW VIBURNUM

Viburnum nudum

By Helen Hamilton, *Past-president of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

Possumhaw Viburnum is an underutilized shrub, with attractive leaves and multi-colored fruits. The opposite leaves are dark green and glossy, somewhat leathery with wavy edges, turning red to purplish in the fall. In April, creamy-white flowers with a musky odor appear in 3 to 5 inch flat-topped clusters (cymes). They are followed in August through October by green pea-sized berries (drupes)

in hanging clusters which change to shades of bright pink, rose, bluish, then purplish black. The color transformation is unsynchronized, resulting in clusters of many-colored fruits.

This ornamental shrub is medium-sized to 12 feet, with glossy twigs and brown-red buds. It is easily grown in average, medium to wet, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. The plant is adaptable, but prefers wet, mucky, acid soils. It transplants well and is tolerant of cold and drought. As needed, pruning can be done in late fall or early spring. Possumhaw viburnum occurs in eastern and central Virginia, and ranges from Newfoundland to Manitoba, south to Florida and Texas.



The straight species will usually produce copious fruits when planted in groups rather than as single specimens. The plant will not self-fertilize, requiring the services of insects to carry pollen to the flowers of another plant. Nursery cultivars are usually clones of a single plant, developed from cuttings, and often do not produce good fruit set.

The fruit is eaten by many songbirds, water birds, shorebirds, and small mammals. ❖

Photo: Possumhaw Viburnum (*Viburnum nudum*) taken by Helen Hamilton
For more information about native plants visit www.vnps.org.