

# *Viburnum lentago* - Nannyberry Viburnum (*Adoxaceae*)

*Viburnum lentago* is an upright shrub or small tree noted for its elongated and valvate winter floral buds, early May creamy-white large inflorescences, red to black bird-attracting berries in autumn, and arching to naturalizing growth habit with age.

## FEATURES

### Form

- large ornamental shrub or small ornamental tree maturing at up to 18' tall x 10' wide
- upright broad-columnar growth habit in youth, becoming an upright thicket if shrub form, or becoming rounded to arching-pendulous if tree form
- medium growth rate



### Culture

- full sun to partial shade
- adaptable to poor soils, compacted soils, soils of various pH, permanently moist soils, dry soils, moderate heat, drought, and pollution
- propagated by rooted stem cuttings, seeds, or transplanting of suckers
- Honeysuckle Family, with no serious pest or disease problems, except for powdery mildew as an annual leaf cosmetic disease, which usually occurs in late Aug. or early Sept. and is persistent until leaf drop
- moderately available in B&B form, and primarily sold as a multi-stemmed shrub, but also trained into single-leader or multi-trunked tree forms

### Foliage

- medium- to dark green, shiny, opposite, elliptical, and serrated, with a widened and concave, winged petiole that has **warty, undulating margins**
- autumn color is a mixture of faded shades of green, purple, red, and yellow, along with white from the powdery mildew, and is ornamentally poor



### Flowers

- creamy-white, flat-topped inflorescences in early May are up to 5" in diameter, and eventually separate in the middle as several sectors containing many miniature flowers

### Fruits

- a colorful mixture of light green, pale yellow, and red-pink fruits in the same cluster slowly change to blue-black and are bloomy (glaucous-surfaced) at maturity, often profusely borne from Aug. through early Dec.; not ornamental from a distance
- wildlife (especially birds) will consume the fruits throughout autumn

### Twigs

- stems and young branches are brown and smooth, sparsely branched in youth, and only become relatively dense and twiggy with maturity
- winter buds are long, smooth, and a good identification feature, with the more narrow vegetative buds being valvate with 2 outer scales, while the much larger floral buds are distinctly swelled at their base and taper to a very long apex, with the 2 outer scales creating a duck-billed appearance

### Trunk

- strongly multi-stemmed to multi-trunked and suckering from the base and nearby roots, but can be maintained as a few-trunked or single leader small tree if the suckers are periodically nipped, starting at an early age
- branches are straight and upright in youth, of gray-brown color, smooth, and with noticeable lenticels, but becoming a platy bark with age
- shrub form quickly becomes leggy with age if suckers are constantly pruned away, but suckers create a thicket or colony if allowed to persist, and effectively cover the central trunks of the large shrub

## USAGE

### Function

- informal hedge when placed in a row, but more often found as a utilitarian (deciduous screen in front of utility boxes), border, entranceway, foundation, woodland edge, or naturalizing shrub
- small ornamental tree when limbed up and maintained in non-suckering form, found at entranceways, large raised planters, large foundations, borders, or as a lawn specimen

### Texture

- medium texture in foliage and when bare
- average to thick density in foliage, and open to average density when bare, being less dense in youth

### Assets

- showy large inflorescences in spring
- can be limbed up into tree form status
- fruits attract wildlife in autumn
- rapid growth rate for a Viburnum
- cold hardiness
- urban tolerant

### Liabilities

- powdery mildew is a cosmetic foliage problem by late summer if sited in poor air circulation areas or semi-shady areas
- gets leggy as a shrub with age
- abundant suckering with age, forming a large thicket or colony (may be considered an asset in naturalized situations)
- may get much larger and broader than expected with age

### Habitat

- Zones 2 to 8
- Native to Eastern North America

## SELECTIONS

### Alternates

- large shrubs with showy inflorescences in mid-spring (*Rhododendron catawbiense*, *Spiraea x vanhouttei*, *Syringa vulgaris*, etc.)
- shrubs that can be limbed up (or grafted onto standards) to become specimen small trees (*Cornus racemosa*, *Forsythia x intermedia*, *Hibiscus syriacus*, *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Grandiflora', *Syringa meyeri*, *Viburnum prunifolium*, *Viburnum rufidulum*, etc.)

### Cultivars – Variants – Related species

- the straight species is practically the only form available, primarily in shrub form but also in tree form

