**Itea virginica** - Virginia Sweetspire (*Saxifragaceae*)

*Itea virginica* is known as a tough shrub with showy flowers and outstanding maroon fall color. The white flower clusters are tubular, appear in mid-summer and are also fragrant. The shrub can be used for naturalizing in either wet or dry sites because of a suckering characteristic. 'Henry’s Garnet' is a popular cultivar.

### FEATURES

**Form**
- Small- to medium-sized, deciduous to semi-evergreen ornamental shrub
- Species form matures at 6' tall x 6' wide, but the primary cultivar is about half that size
- Upright rounded growth habit
- Slow growth rate

**Culture**
- Full sun to full shade
- Prefers moist, rich, slightly acidic soils in partial sun to partial shade, but is highly adaptable to neutral or alkaline pH soils, soils of average fertility, wet sites, or dry sites
- Propagated primarily by rooted cuttings, but also by seed or by separation of the root suckers
- No serious disease or pest problems
- The species form is rarely available, but the cultivar 'Henry's Garnet' is commonly available in container form

**Foliage**
- Species form has broad leaf foliage that is medium green, slowly deciduous to semi-evergreen to evergreen, depending upon hardiness zone of location; 'Henry's Garnet' is intensely burgundy-green and glossy, especially on the new growth
- Leaves are alternate, oblong, and serrated
- Autumn color for the species is crimson burgundy in full sun, and a mixture of green, yellow, orange, and scarlet in partial sun to full shade, while 'Henry's Garnet' is a deep and glossy burgundy under all light conditions
- Coloring from early Oct., through early Dec., with the predominate coloration occurring in Nov.

**Flowers**
- White, 4" long x 1/2" wide fragrant inflorescences bloom from mid-June into early July, being held upright, horizontal, or curving and pendulous, and somewhat bottlebrush-like in appearance

**Fruits**
- Small capsules on a fruiting stalk are green changing to brown, not showy but winter persistent and a good ID feature

### Twigs
- On the species form, young stems are light brown or green, while old stems are gray-brown and striated, with small buds
- On 'Henry's Garnet', the young stems are purplish red, slowly changing to shades of red, brown, and green as the stems mature

### trunk
- Not applicable

### USAGE

**Function**
- Foundation, specimen, border, group planting, or naturalizing shrub, effectively used in sunny to shady and/or dry to wet sites

**Texture**
- Medium-fine texture in foliage and when bare
- Thick density in foliage and when bare

**Assets**
- Attractive and fragrant white inflorescences at the branch tips in early to mid-summer
- Highly adaptable
- Brilliant scarlet or mixed color autumn foliage
- The species form will develop colonies and easily naturalizes, exhibiting erosion control in wet or sloped sites by basal suckering (if this is desired)

**Liabilities**
- The species form will spread beyond its originally intended space by peripheral suckers, creating a tangled colony of erect and arching stems

**Habitat**
- Zones 5 to 9
- Native to the Southern U.S.

### SELECTIONS

**Alternates**
- Shrubs with fragrant flowers (*Clethra alnifolia*, *Hamamelis vernalis* or *Hamamelis × intermedia* cultivar, *Philadelphus* species, *Syringa* species and cultivars, etc.) or those flowering in summer (*Clethra alnifolia*, *Heptacodium miconioides*, *Hibiscus syriacus*, *Hydrangea* species, *Hypericum* species, *Philadelphus* species, etc.)
- Shrubs with prolonged and vibrant autumn color (*Euonymus alata*, *Fothergilla gardenii*, *Hamamelis × Arnold Promise*, *Hydrangea quercifolia*, *Spiraea × bumalda* 'Goldflame', *Viburnum plicatum* var. *tomentosum* 'Mariesii', etc.)
- Shrubs tolerant of dry, continuously moist, or wet sites (*Cornus alba*, *C. racemosa*, *C. sanguinea*, or *C. sericea*, *Hydrangea quercifolia*, *Salix purpurea*, etc.)

**Cultivars – Variants – Related species**

*Itea virginica* 'Henry's Garnet' – the main cultivar in the trade; a small spreading shrub noted for its differences from the species: compact growth habit (to 3' x 4'), reddish-purple first-year basal stems that often do not branch, lustrous dark green foliage, showier flower clusters 3-6" long, and vibrant burgundy-purple to garnet shiny autumn color that develops in late Oct., peaks throughout Nov., and extends into early Dec., slowly absicising in northern climates but semi-evergreen in southern climates

*Itea virginica* Little Henry® - a smaller, more compact form of 'Henry's Garnet'