Viburnum prunifolium - Blackhaw Viburnum (*Adoxaceae*)

Viburnum prunifolium is a small tree or large shrub noted for spring flowers, autumn fruits and leaf color, dense twigginess, low shade, and slow growth. Blackhaw Viburnum is useful for wildlife refuge, screen, or naturalized mass planting.

FEATURES

Form
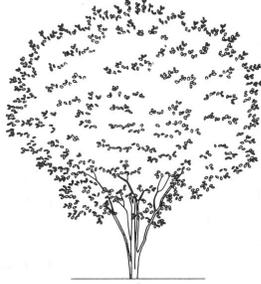
-large shrub to small tree
-maturing up to 15' x 10'; upright oval growth habit in youth, becoming upright rounded with age
-multi-trunked and Washington Hawthorn-like in terms of dense twigginess (with short stubby lateral twigs, but no thorns)
-slow growth rate

Culture
-full sun to partial shade
-generally urban tolerant; abundantly available in B&B or container form
-primarily available in shrub form but also in single leader or multi-trunked tree forms; propagated by seeds or rooted cuttings
-Honeysuckle Family, with no serious pest problems and powdery mildew as an occasional leaf cosmetic disease
-the twiggiest and most dense Viburnum, resembling a shrub form Washington Hawthorn (hence the common name of Blackhaw Viburnum, with the "black" referring to the color of very old bark, and the "haw" referring to the Hawthorn-like appearance)
-in addition to being confused with *Viburnum lentago*, it also shares many morphological features in common with *Viburnum cassinoides* (Witherod Viburnum, noted for its consistent pink and blue autumn fruits) and *Viburnum rufidulum* (Rusty Blackhaw Viburnum, noted for its super-glossy dark green summer foliage that explodes into vibrant scarlet or bright yellow hues in autumn)

Foliage
-medium green, deciduous, opposite, elliptical, finely serrated; petiole is widened but has non-warty and non-undulating smooth margins; basal pair of small blue-green auricles (at base of newly emerging stems) are not long persistent; autumn color
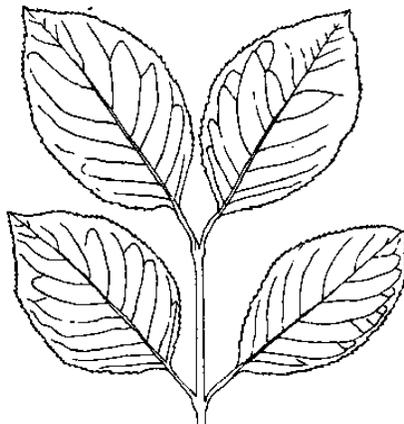
variable from dark green, burgundy, red, orange, yellow, or purple, and often a mixture thereof, and can be showy

Flowers
-creamy white flat-topped inflorescences in early May to 2.5" in total diameter, effective for 1-2 weeks

Fruits
-mixture of green, yellow, and red fruits in upright to pendulous clusters, changing to blue-black or blue-pink and rather bloomy; profusely borne from Aug.-Nov.; attractive when viewed up-close

Twigs
-smooth, gray, and thin, with prominent winter buds
-vegetative buds valvate with 2 outer scales, while the floral buds are swelled at the base and tapering to a short stubby apex with 2 scales

Trunk
-multi-trunked, brown-gray, and becoming platy and shredding with age

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Function
-formal or informal hedges (can be planted densely for a hedge that branches almost to the ground) or deciduous screen
-border, entranceway, foundation, or specimen shrub
-can be planted in masses to form non-thorny naturalizing thickets; the twiggiest and most dense Viburnum, resembling a Washington Hawthorn

Texture
-medium texture in foliage and when bare; thick density in foliage and when bare

Assets
-urban tolerant; showy creamy inflorescences in spring and showy red-black berries in autumn
-dense twigs and foliage can be utilized as a deciduous screen; if limbed up, a possible substitute for Washington Hawthorn without its malodorous flowers but also without its showy, winter persistent, red berries
-wildlife refuge and attraction

Liabilities
-the dense low-branching twiggy habit with its associated shade, wildlife attraction; occasional suckers from the roots

Habitat
-Zones 3 to 9
-Native to the Eastern and Midwestern U.S.

SELECTIONS

Alternates
-naturalizing shrubs with good solid or mixed autumn color when placed in full sun (*Aronia arbutifolia*, *Euonymus alatus*, *Hydrangea quercifolia*, *Rhus glabra*, etc.)
-deciduous shrubs ideal for naturalized mass plantings (*Cornus racemosa*, *Ilex verticillata*, *Kerria japonica*, *Rhus aromatica*, *Sambucus canadensis*)
-deciduous shrubs or trees for wildlife protective refuge (*Crataegus*, *Photinia villosa*, *Malus*, *Lonicera tatarica*, etc.)