



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Viburnum obovatum*¹

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Introduction

Walter Viburnum, in the opinion of some nursery growers, is the very best Viburnum for use in central and south Florida. Unfortunately, it is not widely available. It is a shrub or small tree that can grow to a height of about 25 feet. However, there are forms of this plant that are upright, spreading, weeping or dwarf. It is difficult to determine which form you are buying by simply looking at the plant. The only way to determine the ultimate height and shape of the plant is to know the original source of the plant material. A reputable nursery will know the characteristics of their plants. The evergreen leaves of Walter Viburnum vary from very small to medium sized, glossy, leathery, and dark green. They are also fragrant when crushed. The winter or spring flowers occur in small, convex cymes held at the branch tips before new growth emerges. Flowers can cover the plant with white blooms for about 2 or three weeks. The fruits of this plant are small drupes that turn from red to black during maturation.

General Information

Scientific name: *Viburnum obovatum*

Pronunciation: vye-BER-num ah-boe-VAY-tum

Common name(s): Blackhaw, Walter Viburnum

Family: *Caprifoliaceae*

Plant type: tree

USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 10 (Fig. 1)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: espalier; superior hedge; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; screen; border; attracts butterflies; residential street tree; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size)

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 8 to 25 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

Plant habit: oval

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: revolute; serrate

Leaf shape: obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: black
Fruit characteristic: attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; no thorns; not particularly showy
Current year stem/twig color: gray/silver
Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Walter Viburnum may be utilized in the landscape as a fine-textured, clipped hedge or tall screen. Small leaves make it a great candidate for shearing into a topiary, espalier or formal hedge. Older specimens can be trained into small trees with several trunks. Nurseries can also train young plants to grow in this manner.

Walter Viburnum will grow well in a site that receives full sun or shade. It is native to acidic wetland forests which are frequently inundated for a period of time during the year, but it tolerates a broad range of growing conditions including moderate drought.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.