



Viburnum rufidulum Rusty Blackhaw¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

A native of the well-drained, upland woods of southeastern North America, Rusty Blackhaw forms a multiple or (occasionally) single-trunked small tree or large shrub, reaching 25 feet in height with an equal spread (Fig. 1). The dark bark is blocky, resembling older Flowering Dogwood bark. Trunks usually grow no thicker than six inches and arch away from the tree, forming a pleasing, vase-shaped crown. Leaves are dark green, three inches long, leathery, and extremely glossy. The tree is covered in springtime with striking five-inch-wide clusters of small, white blooms. These flowers are followed by clusters of dark blue, waxy, one-half-inch-long fruits that are extremely popular with wildlife and will occasionally persist on the plant from September throughout the autumn, if not eaten by wildlife. In fall, Rusty Blackhaw puts on a brilliant display of scarlet red to purple foliage.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Viburnum rufidulum*

Pronunciation: vye-BER-num roo-FID-yoo-lum

Common name(s): Rusty Blackhaw, Southern Blackhaw

Family: *Caprifoliaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; hedge; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings

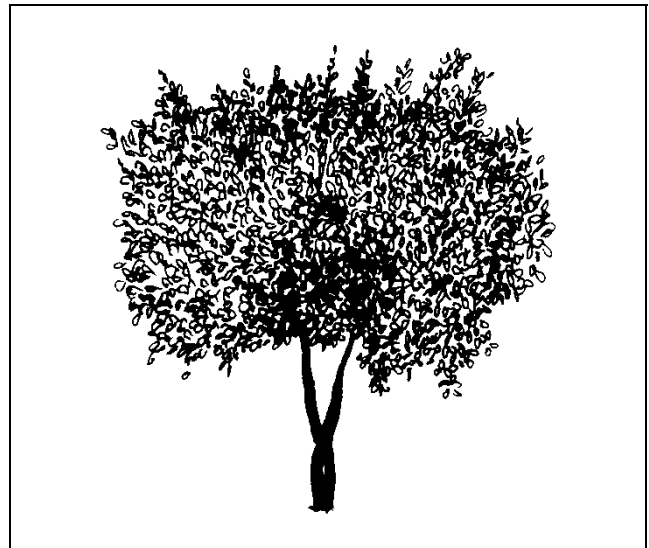


Figure 1. Mature Rusty Blackhaw.

in the highway; near a deck or patio; reclamation plant; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

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

DESCRIPTION

Height: 20 to 25 feet

Spread: 20 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: vase shape

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrulate

Leaf shape: obovate; ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: purple; red

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: < .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: blue

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium; thin

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in the shade; tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

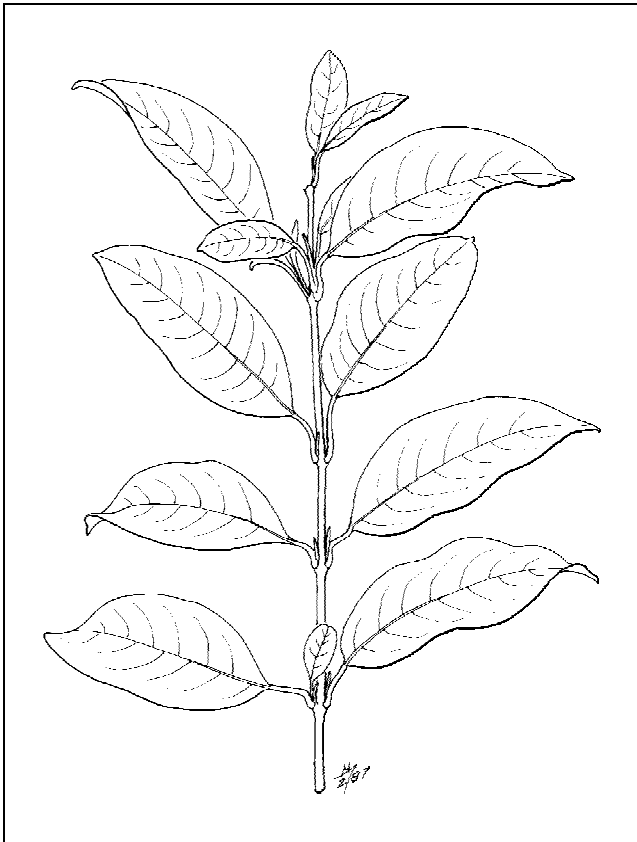


Figure 3. Foliage of Rusty Blackhaw.

Soil salt tolerance: poor

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Rusty Blackhaw will grow and look nice in full sun or partial shade on any reasonably fertile, well-drained soil. The tree grows in a shady spot but forms a more open habit. Flowering is significantly reduced in the shade. Although tolerant of drought, it will not tolerate compacted soil. This would be a good tree for planting beneath power lines and in other limited space areas. Useful as a hedge, specimen, or border tree, this deciduous tree adapts well to urban areas. Shoots arise from the root system, sometimes as far out as the dripline. This could be a maintenance problem when planted in a bed of mulch. But sprouts

would be routinely cut with regular mowing when planted as a street tree in a lawn. Pests are usually not a major problem.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests

This tree is usually pest-free. *Viburnum* aphid is gray to dark green and feeds in clusters at the tips of the branches, causing leaf curl. *Viburnum opulus* is especially susceptible. The insects can be dislodged with high pressure water spray from the garden hose.

Inspect the stems of unhealthy-looking plants for possible scale infestations. If found, spray with horticultural oil for some control.

Diseases

Bacterial leafspot causes round, water-soaked spots on leaves and young stems. These develop into shrunken, brown areas about 1/8-inch in diameter. Destroy infected leaves, if you wish. This is not a problem to be concerned about.

Bacterial crown gall forms galls on the lower stems. Do not replant in the same spot.

Shoot blight causes grayish to brown decayed spots on the leaves. The spots first appear at the leaf margins, then spread to the rest of the leaf. Infected flower clusters or twigs are killed.

A number of fungi cause leaf spots. Rake up and destroy infected leaves. These are usually not a serious problem.

Powdery mildew causes a white powdery growth on the leaves, but this *Viburnum* is usually not affected.