



# Viburnums: Ideal Shrubs for Iowa Landscapes

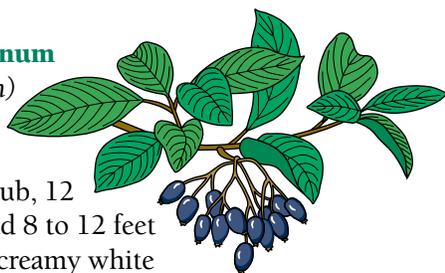
Shrubs add structure and dimension to foundation plantings and mixed borders. They are permanent plantings; some are capable of occupying a large garden space. Because they offer landscape appeal in more than one season, viburnums are an excellent shrub choice for Iowa landscapes.

Several shrubs in the *Viburnum* genus offer lovely clusters of white spring blossoms followed by attractive summer foliage and brilliant fall color. Some viburnums produce brightly colored berry-like fruit, called drupes, which last well into the winter, or until they are eaten by birds.

Not all viburnums are hardy in mid-Iowa (zones 4 and 5). The following list includes some of the best species and cultivars for this area. The first three are native to the United States.

## The **Blackhaw Viburnum** (*Viburnum prunifolium*)

grows into a small round-headed tree or multi-stemmed shrub, 12 to 15 feet in height and 8 to 12 feet in width. It produces creamy white blossoms in spring, but it is grown mostly for its attractive foliage and fruit. Edible drupes ripen from pink to black in September and attract birds. Glossy green summer foliage turns to red, bronze, and purple in autumn. Fall color can be brilliant, depending on the individual plant and the amount of sun it receives. The Blackhaw Viburnum tolerates drier soils than other viburnums. It can be massed, but also makes a beautiful small tree when planted as a specimen.



## The **Arrowwood Viburnum** (*Viburnum dentatum*),

named for its slender, straight shoots, can reach 6 to 8 feet in height and width. It produces 2- to 4-inch, flat-topped white blossoms from May to early June. Bluish-black drupes cover the plants from September to October or until they are devoured by birds. The deep green foliage in summer turns from yellow to reddish-purple in fall. Arrowwood Viburnum makes an excellent hedge for semi-shady or sunny locations. This plant requires minimal pruning, but suckers growing from the base may require cutting back. Arrowwood Viburnum cultivars to look for include Bluemuffin® (*V. dentatum* 'Christom') and Autumn Jazz® (*V. dentatum* 'Ralph Senior'). Bluemuffin® is a compact form reaching 5 to 7 feet in height and 4 to 6 feet in width. Autumn Jazz® is aptly named because of its excellent range of fall color including yellow, orange, red, and burgundy.



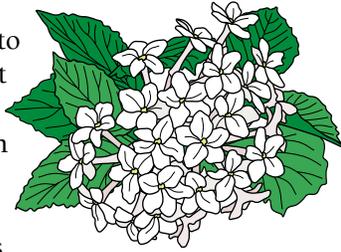
## The **American Cranberrybush**, (*Viburnum trilobum*)

will grow into a dense, round-topped, shrub 10 to 12 feet in height and width. Large white blossoms open in mid- to late May followed by bright red clusters of drupes in the fall that can last into February. The new spring foliage has a reddish cast, summer leaves are glossy green, and autumn color varies from yellow to a reddish-purple. If space is limited, look for the cultivar 'Bailey Compact', which will reach only 5 or 6 feet in height and width. Another cultivar to consider is Red Wing® (*V. trilobum* 'J.N. Select'); it is slightly smaller than the species, reaching 8 to 10 feet in height and 6 to 8 feet in width, and has the other outstanding multi-season features.



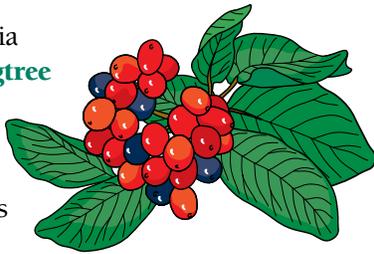
## The Judd Viburnum

(*Viburnum juddii*) will grow into a full, rounded form, 6 to 8 feet tall and almost as wide. It is valued for its pink buds, which open into sweetly fragrant white blossoms in May. The softly pubescent (fuzzy) leaves are dark green, but can turn a deep red-bronze-purple in autumn. The Judd Viburnum is a hybrid that has largely replaced the Korean Spicebush Viburnum (*Viburnum carlesii*), known for similar desirable traits, and also a good choice when available. To best appreciate the heady aroma produced by the flowers in the early spring, plant either species near an entry or walkway.



Originally from western Asia and Europe, the **Wayfaringtree**

(*Viburnum lantana*), grows 10 to 15 feet in height and width, with a stout, spreading habit. It produces large, white, flat-topped blossoms in mid-May that give way to red fruits that turn black by late summer. The large, dark green, leathery leaves give this plant a coarse texture. The leaves take on a vivid purplish-red color in the fall and the leaves often persist into early winter. The cultivar Mohican (*V. lantana* 'Mohican') has a more compact growth habit, reaching 6 feet in height and 6 to 8 feet in width. This smaller size and more compact growth habit make it an ideal hedge plant.



## Site Selection

Viburnums do best when planted in spring or early fall. As a group they prefer well-drained and evenly moist soil, but will tolerate some dry spells. Unlike many other ornamental shrubs, viburnums do well in Iowa's alkaline soil. They thrive in both sunny and semi-shady areas, although better fall color tends to develop on plants in more sun. Since most viburnums grow to a relatively large size, be sure to select an area that will accommodate their mature size.

## Care and Maintenance

Viburnums require little maintenance. A thick layer of mulch will prevent competition from weeds and help to keep their roots cool and moist. They benefit from regular watering.

Pruning for shape is seldom necessary, however, judicious pruning encourages more compact growth. Any needed pruning should be done after blossoms are spent, although this will remove the season's developing fruit. Renew

mature shrubs in the spring before new growth begins by cutting old or weak stems back to the ground. For the viburnums listed, problems with diseases and pests are minimal in the Iowa climate.

## For more information

To learn more about selection, planting, cultural practices, and environmental quality, contact your local Iowa State University Extension office or visit these websites:

[www.extension.iastate.edu/store](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/store)

[www.reimangardens.iastate.edu](http://www.reimangardens.iastate.edu)

Call ISU's Hortline at 515-294-3108, (Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-noon and 1-4:30 p.m.)

If you want to learn more about horticulture through training and volunteer work, ask your local ISU Extension office for information about the Iowa Master Gardener program.



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