A Selection of Native Shrubs and Noteworthy Non-Native Shrubs

Shrubs of the Chicago Region

Volunteer Stewardship Network – Chicago Wilderness

Photos by: © Paul Rothrock (Taylor University, IN), © John & Jane Balaban (bals2@comcast.net; North Branch Restoration Project), © Kenneth Dritz, © Sue Auerbach, © Melanie Gunn, © Sharon Shattuck, and © William Burger (Field Museum). Produced by: Jennie Kluse and Sharon Shattuck, with assistance from Ken Klick (Lake County Forest Preserve), Paul Rothrock, Sue Auerbach, John & Jane Balaban, and Laurel Ross. © Environment, Culture and Conservation, The Field Museum, Chicago, IL 60605 USA. [http://www.fmnh.org/temperateguides]. Chicago Wilderness Guide #5 version 1 (06/2008)

EVERGREEN SHRUBS:

GROUP 1.

LEAVES ARE NEEDLES or SCALES.

1 Juniperus horizontalis TRAILING JUNIPER:
Plants have a creeping habit; some leaves are needles but most are scales with a whitish coat; fruit a bluish-whitish berry-like cone; male cones on separate plants; grows in sandy soils.

2 Juniperus communis COMMON JUNIPER:
Erect shrub or tree (up to 3 m tall); needles whorled on stem; fruit a bluish or black berry-like cone; grows only in dunes/bluffs bordering Lake Michigan.

DECIDUOUS SHRUBS:

GROUP 2.

LEAVES COMPOUND (more than one leaflet per stalk).

STEMS ARMED.

3 Rosa setigera ILLINOIS ROSE:
Mature plant with long-arching stems; sparse prickles; leaflets usually 3, but sometimes 5; styles (female pollen tube) fused into a column; stipules narrow to tip.

4 Rosa palustris SWAMP ROSE:
Upright shrub; stems very thorny; leaflets 5-7; sepals fall from mature fruit; fruit smooth, red berry-like hips; grows in wet and open ditches, bogs, and swamps.

5 Rosa carolina PASTURE ROSE:
Upright shrub; leaflets 5-7; stipules flat and pointed; flowers are solitary; buds and fruits w/ glandular hairs; grows in dry habitat.

6 Rosa blanda EARLY WILD ROSE:
Stems mostly smooth; prickles may be present at plant base; leaflets 5-7 with soft hairy underside; flowers are solitary and bloom starting mid-May.
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7 Rosa multiflora

Non-native, invasive; arching, prickly stems; leaflets 7-9; stipules feathered; many white flowers; styles fused into column; compare with R. setigera.

8 Rubus hispidus

Plant ankle-high with bristly trailing stems; leaflets 3, small (< 5 cm long); leaves evergreen; ripe fruit black.

9 Rubus flagellaris

COMMON DEWBERRY: Plant ankle-high and trailing; large prickles; leaflets 3 (usually) to 5; terminal leaflet with short stem and stipules; leaf undersides not velvety; mature fruit black.

10 Rubus odoratus

PURPLE FLOWERING RASPBERRY: Leaves maple-like, simple, 3-5 lobed with toothed margins; large leaves (< 26 cm long) and flowers (3-6 cm wide); purple flowers; fruit red, leaving a white knob (receptacle) when picked. In contrast, blackberries and dewberries detach from plant w/ receptacle inside in the fruit.

11 Rubus occidentalis

BLACK RASPBERRY: Stems and leaf undersides have a whitish coat; new stems have soft prickles, but otherwise prickles are stout, hooked; leaflets usually 3 (palmately compound if 5); leaf margin doubly toothed; fruit purple-black. A similar species, Rubus idaeus strigosus (red raspberry) has red fruit and lacks whitish coat.

12 Rubus alleghenensis

COMMON BLACK-BERRY: stems angular and dangerously thorny; stout prickles have broad base; 3-7 leaflets palmately compound; leaf and flower stalks w/ glandular hairs; fruit black.
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**DECIDUOUS SHRUBS:**

**GROUP 3.**

**LEAVES COMPOUND** (more than one leaflet per stalk).

**STEMS WITHOUT THORNS or SPINES.**

13 *Rubus pensilvanicus* **YANKEE BLACKBERRY:**

Stems with straight spines; leaflets 5-7; leaf undersides softly hairy and margins toothed or doubly toothed; fruit black.

14 *Xanthoxylum americanum* **PRICKLY ASH:**

Member of the citrus family with aromatic leaves; branches with paired spines; 5-11 leaflets; grows in dry-mesic woods.

15 *Potentilla fruticosa* (**Dasiphora floribunda**) **SHRUBBY CINQUEFOIL:** leaflets 5-7, pinnately compound; leaf margins roll outward; in our region grows only in fens and coastal wetlands.

16 *Amorpha canescens* **LEAD PLANT:**

Shrub up to waist high; plant has grayish appearance; grows in prairies. Comparatively, *A. fruticosa* (indigo bush) is an overhead shrub with hairless leaf undersides and grows in wetlands and floodplains.

17 *Staphylea trifolia* **BLADDERNUT:**

Branches greenish striped with white, corky spots; leaflets pointed; terminal leaflet on a long-stalk, while lateral leaflets barely stalked; flower clusters at leaf nodes drooping; fruit a 3-lobed papery, inflated capsule.

18 *Sambucus canadensis* **ELDERBERRY:** 5-9 pinnately compound leaflets; twigs have white pith; large, spreading inflorescence w/ white flowers; fruit is dark purple.
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19 Ptelea trifoliata  WAFFER ASH:
Three leaflets (< 15 cm long each); terminal leaflet largest and short-branched; fruit odor of hops; plant grows in sand dunes and bedrock soil. *P. trifoliata mollis* (downy wafer ash) has fuzzy leaves and aromatic flowers attracting early evening moths.

20 Aralia nudicaulis  WILD SARSAPARILLA:
Plant barely knee high; dies back to ground each year; purplish cast to foliage, especially in spring and fall; leaves pinnately compound; leaflets large (< 13 cm long); leaf margins toothed; flowers clumped on 3 spheres. *A. racemosa* (spikenard) reaches several meters tall and has large, spreading leaves; fruit reminiscent of rootbeer flavor.

21 Rhus aromatica  DWARF FRAGRANT SUMAC:
Pungent smell when bruised; 3 small leaflets (< 4 cm long); leaf margin lobed and soft hairy; fruit red and hairy; primarily found in sand prairies and dunes, though also bedrock exposures. Distinguished from the highly allergenic climbing vine, *Rhus radicans* (poison ivy), which has a more angular leaf margin and white berries.

22 Rhus typhina  STAGHORN SUMAC:
Branches covered in tan, velvety hairs; leaflets 13-27 with toothed margins; fruits red and densely hairy.

23 Rhus copallina latifolia  SHINING SUMAC:
Branches covered in ashy, soft hairs; leaflets 9-23 with smooth margins; leaf axis winged; fruits red and densely hairy; found only in sandy soil.

24 Rhus glabra  SMOOTH SUMAC:
Branches with whitish coat and not hairy; leaflets 11-13 with toothed margins; fruits red and densely hairy.
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DECIDUOUS SHRUBS:

GROUP 4.

LEAVES SIMPLE (one leaf per stalk).

LEAVES OPPOSITE.

LEAF MARGIN ENTIRE (no teeth).

25 **Rhus vernix** (*Toxicodendron vernix*)

Causes skin rash in most people; bark with smooth whitish coat, but without hairs; leaflets 9-13; leaflets elliptical with smooth margins; terminal leaflet longer stalked than lateral leaflets; fruits grayish-white on red drooping stalk; grows in bogs.

26 Image illustrates the ability of dogwood (*Cornus* sp.) leaves to hold together by “strings” in the leaf veins when torn.

27 **Cornus racemosa**

Freely sprouts from roots; branches gray with brown pith; young twigs reddish; leaves with 3-4 pairs of arcing veins; inflorescence as broad as high; fruits white on red branches.

28 **Cornus obliqua**

Branches reddish-brown to grayish with orange-brown pith; young growth hairy; leaves with arcing veins; leaf underside pale with flattened hairs; fruits cobalt blue.

29 **Cornus stolonifera** (*C. sericea*)

Forms thickets; branches dark red with white pith; leaves with 5-7 pairs of viens and pale, often hairy undersides; fruits white or grayish. *C. rugosa* (round-leaved dogwood) has greenish branches with white pith, leaves with wooly undersides and pale blue fruits.

30 **Cephalanthus occidentalis**

Whorled leaves rounded at base w/glossy upper surface; flowers in white spheres, blooming in July; frequented by butterflies.
31 Decodon verticillatus  
SWAMP LOOSESTRIFE:  
Almost always growing in shallow water; lower stems spongy; leaves opposite, whorled; flowers magenta, < 2.5 cm wide.

32 Hypericum kalmianum  
KALM’S ST. JOHN’S-WORT: exfoliating bark; leaves oblong, bluish-green, and dotted with glands; flowers yellow with many stamen; fruit a beaked capsule; found most often in wet sand near Lake Michigan.

33 Mitchella repens  
PARTRIDGE BERRY:  
Plant has creeping habit; leaves a rounded heart shape with white midrib; flowers are paired: 2 white tubular flowers w/ fused ovary; petals hairy; fruit red berry with 2 indentations.

34 Symphoricarpos albus  
SNOWBERRY:  
Branches sparsely, soft hairy; leaves rounded; style not exceeding petals (< 3 mm long); fruit bright white, often persisting into fall.  
S. occidentalis (wolfberry) style exceeds petals (> 3 mm) and fruit is greenish-white.

35 Lonicera dioica  
RED HONEYSUCKLE: similar to L. prolifera but more common near Lake Michigan, leaves thicker, and flowers tinged purple or brick-red.

36 Lonicera prolifera  
YELLOW HONEYSUCKLE:  
Sprawling vine; uppermost leaves fused into disk; lower leaves have a stalk; leaves w/ whitish coat; yellow flowers in clumps.

37 Lonicera maackii  
AMUR HONEYSUCKLE:  
Non-native, invasive; upright shrub; leaf tip pointed; leaf margin ciliate; flowers white, fading yellow. A similar invasive, L. tutorica (Tatarian honeysuckle) differs w/ early spring leaf emergence, brittle twigs, and varying pink flowers.
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WEB VERSION

DECIDUOUS SHRUBS:

GROUP 5.

LEAVES SIMPLE (one leaf per stalk).

LEAVES OPPOSITE.

LEAF MARGIN TOOTHED or LOBED.

38 Diervilla lonicera

DWARF HONEYSUCKLE:

Plant barely 1 m tall; arching stems; leaves pointed, sometimes hairy on lower surface; flowers yellow-red with spreading petals; fruit a dry, long-pointed vase shape with hairy tips.

39 Euonymus alatus

WINGED EUONYMUS:

Non-native, planted extensively; branches are corky-winged; scarlet fall leaf color.

40 Euonymus atropurpureus

WAHOO:

Fall leaf color dull red; flowers 4-parted, branching from leaf base; fruit striking red. A similar, but non-native species, E. europaeus (European spindle tree) has smooth branches and greenish-white flowers.

41 Euonymus obovatus

RUNNING STRAWBERRY BUSH:

Plants trailing on ground, less than 10 cm tall; flowers 5-parted; fruit a warty capsule.

42 Viburnum lentago

NANNYBERRY:

Smells like dirty socks; branches and leaves smooth; leaves elliptic; leaf stalk has undulating, winged margin; mature fruit black with whitish coat.

43 Viburnum prunifolium

BLACK HAW:

Twigs stout; branches and leaves smooth (brown-scaly when young); very small leaves may be present below regular leaves; fruit blue-black.
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**WEB VERSION**

44 **Viburnum recognitum** (*V. dentatum lucidum*) SMOOTH ARROW-WOOD: Tall shrub; lower leaves on a twig have long stalks (> 1 cm) and lack stipules; leaf margin coarsely toothed. The more rare *V. dentatum* (southern arrow-wood) is similar but has hairy leaf stalks, while *V. rafinesquianum* (downy arrow-wood) has stipules and very short leaf stalks (0 - 5 mm long).

45 **Viburnum trilobum** HIGHBUSH CRANBERRY: May be extinct in the wild; leaves 3-lobed, coarse toothed, pointed; leaf upper-surface sparsely hairy; leaf stalk has columnar glands; marginal flowers in cluster are large and sterile; fruit is orange-red.

46 **Viburnum opulus** EUROPEAN HIGHBUSH CRANBERRY: non-native; leaves 3-lobed, coarse-toothed; leaf upper-surface not hairy; leaf stalk with saucer-shaped glands; marginal flowers sterile; fruit red, often remaining into winter.

47 **Viburnum acerifolium** MAPLE-LEAVED ARROW-WOOD: Leaf palmately lobed, coarsely toothed; leaf lower surface w/ branched hairs; leaf stalks w/out glands; marginal flowers sterile; fruit purple-black at maturity.

48 **Chimaphila maculata** SPOTTED WINTERGREEN: ankle-high evergreen; leaves whorled in 3’s; leaf has white vein down center; fruit a brown, erect capsule.

49 **Chimaphila umbellata cisatlantica** PIPSISSEWA: ankle-high evergreen; leaves whorled; leaf leathery; fruit a depressed, round capsule.

**DECIDUOUS SHRUBS:**

**GROUP 6.**

PLANTS KNEE-HIGH OR LOWER.

LEAVES SIMPLE (one leaf per stalk).

LEAVES ALTERNATE.
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DECIDUOUS SHRUBS:

GROUP 7.
PLANTS ERECT (quickly reaching heights greater than 40 cm).

LEAVES SIMPLE (one leaf per stalk).

LEAVES ALTERNATE.

LEAF MARGINS ENTIRE.

50 Vaccinium angustifolium  EARLY LOW BLUEBERRY:
Knee-high, colony forming shrub; leaves relatively short (< 3 cm long); leaf margins w/ finely spine-tipped teeth; fruit ripens about 2 weeks earlier than V. pallidum (late low blueberry); prefers sandy soils. V. corymbosum (highbush blueberry), a wetland species that quickly exceeds 1 m, may be seen further east in Indiana.

51 Vaccinium pallidum  LATE LOW BLUEBERRY:
Knee-high, colony-forming shrub; leaves usually 3-5 cm long and more than 1.5 cm wide, paler beneath; leaf margins smooth or finely toothed; prefers sandy soils.

52 Arctostaphylos uva-ursi coactalis
BEARBERRY: evergreen trailing shrub; leaf margins entire; mature fruit red; grows only on Lake Michigan dunes.

53 Gaultheria procumbens
WINTERGREEN:
Ankle-high evergreen woody plant; leaves thick, oval (> 1.5 cm long), tasting of mint; leaf margins subtly toothed below middle; fruit red.

54 Gaylussacia baccata
BOX HUCKLEBERRY:
Leaves have golden resin dots on both sides; leaf margins smooth; fruit has 10 seeds.

55 Cornus alternifolia
ALTERNATE-LEAVED DOGWOOD: shrub pagoda shaped w/horizontal branching; older twigs pale yellow; leaves have pale undersides, arcing venation, and may not always be alternate; fruit blue-black.
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DECIDUOUS SHRUBS:

GROUP 8.

PLANTS AS IN GROUP 7, BUT LEAF MARGINS TOOTHED OR LOBED.

LEAF VENATION PINNATE.

FRUITS FLESHY.

56 Lindera benzoin

Pronounced light spots on bark; leaves papery thin, widest near tip, and < 15 cm long; yellow flowers; aromatic flowers and fruit; mature fruit red.

57 Dirca palustris

Leatherwood:

Shrub 2 m tall; twigs jointed at nodes; leaves elliptic, some with whitish coat; forms clusters of 2-4 tubular yellow flowers in early spring; fruit a red color.

58 Rhamnus frangula

GLOSSY BUCKTHORN:

Non-native, invasive; thornless; leaves glossy; leaf buds fuzzy; ripening fruit multi-colored. Our native buckthorns, R. alnifolia (alder buckthorn) and R. lanceolata (lance-leaved buckthorn) are rare and have a very limited range.

59 Rhamnus cathartica

COMMON BUCKTHORN:

Non-native, invasive; one of the first shrubs to leaf-out in spring and last to lose leaves in fall; stem tips sharp, almost thorn-like; many-flowered clusters; when cut, may sprout from roots.

60 Prunus virginiana

CHOKE CHERRY:

Branches often have dark colored fungal cankers; leaf margins toothed, but teeth not recurved; leaf stalk has minute glands; white flowers on terminal stalks in May.

61 Prunus americana

WILD PLUM:

Often forms thickets in sun; twigs sharp; leaves glandless; leaf margins doubly toothed; mature fruits round and red. A similar species, P. nigra (Canada plum), differs in that the leaves have glands on toothed margins and stalk.
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62 Prunus pumila

Sanding shrub; leaf margins entire only in lower 1/3 of leaf; fruit tart; grows only in sandy soil.

Another genus in the rose family, chokeberry (Aronia), is superficially reminiscent of cherry (Prunus). The fruit of Aronia prunifolia is a black or red, multi-seeded pome.

63 Ilex verticillata

Male and female plants separate; branches gray w/ light, scattered dots; leaf base widest above middle, but narrowed to tip; bright red fruit present from October until birds eat each fruit.

64 Spiraea alba

Twigs smooth; leaves mostly smooth; flowers white; fruit a smooth follicle.

65 Spiraea tomentosa rosea

Leaf undersides w/ fine cobwebby, tangled red hairs; flowers magenta; fruit a hairy follicle; found growing in acid sand prairies and bogs.

66 Comptonia peregrina

Plant waist-high; plant very aromatic; leaf margin lobed; flowers yellow-green; fruit a cluster of nutlets; grows only in sandy soil.

67 Alnus rugosa

Twigs velvety, brown with light spots; leaf margins doubly toothed; leaf narrow to tip; fruit cone-like. Comparatively, A. serrulata (smooth alder) has both toothed and wavy leaf margins. A. glutinosa (European alder) leaves are rounded or notched at tip.

68 Betula pumila

Dwarf birch: trunk diameter never exceeding 3 cm thick; leaves small (< 3 cm long); grows in bogs and fens.
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**WEB VERSION**

69 *Salix interior* SANDBAR WILLOW:
The many different willows of the Chicago region are difficult to ID. *S. interior* is the most common species in our area; forms dense thickets; leaves narrow and long w/ widely spaced, glandular teeth; stems are narrow (< 8 cm).

70 *Hamamelis virginiana* WITCH HAZEL:
Plant has distinct scent of witch hazel; spreading branches bloom in late fall; twigs brown w/ light spots; yellow flower petals linear; fruit an exploding capsule; leaf margins scalloped.

71 *Corylus americana* AMERICAN HAZELNUT:
Zigzag branching; leaves oval; leaf margins doubly toothed; flowers in catkins found throughout the year; fruit a nut enclosed by two leafy bracts.

72 *Ceanothus americanus* NEW JERSEY TEA:
Leaf is densely tan hairy and strongly 3-veined; flower w/ white clawed petals; fruit a 3-lobed capsule, turning black at maturity. Compare w/ *Rhamnus cathartica*.

73 *Ceanothus herbaceus* INLAND NEW JERSEY TEA:
Leaves smooth above, but lightly hairy below; leaf margins w/ gland-tipped teeth; white flowers are 5-clawed; confined to sand prairies of Illinois Beach State Park.
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74 Physocarpus opulifolius

Species is scarce in the wild, but often planted in landscapes; exfoliating bark; leaf 3-lobed; fruit a dry capsule.

75 Ribes cynosbat

PRICKLY WILD GOOSEBERRY:
Fruit spiny, stems not (though stems sometimes spiny at nodes); leaf blunt at tip; flower white.

76 Ribes americanum

Stems and fruit smooth; leaves lobed w/ pointed tips; leaf undersides w/ glands; flowers yellow.

77 Ribes missourien

WILD GOOSEBERRY:
Stem spiny, fruit not; thorns in 2-3 at nodes; leaves lobed, blunt at tip; flower white w/ stamen 2-3 X length of tubular flower. A similar wetland species, R. hirtellum (northern gooseberry) differs by having greenish-purplish flowers w/ stamen 1 X length of tubular flower.

MAP TO SHRUB GROUPS

I. Leaves evergreen, needle- or scale-like – GROUP 1

II. Leaves deciduous

A. Leaves compound (more than one leaflet per stalk)
   1. Stems armed – GROUP 2
   2. Stems unarmed – GROUP 3

B. Leaves simple (one leaf per stalk)
   1. Leaves opposite
      a. Leaf margins entire (no teeth) – GROUP 4
      b. Leaf margins toothed or lobed – GROUP 5
   2. Leaves alternate
      a. Plants less than 40 cm tall – GROUP 6
      b. Plants erect, quickly reaching more than 40 cm tall
         i. Leaf margins entire (no teeth) – GROUP 7
         ii. Leaf margins toothed or lobed
            1). Leaf venation pinnate
               a. fruits fleshy – GROUP 8
               b. fruits non-fleshy – GROUP 9
            2). Leaf venation palmate – GROUP 10

This guide includes a selection of shrubs (defined here as woody plants of short to medium stature lacking a central trunk, and instead branching from base) that can be found in the Chicago Region (see map at http://www.vplants.org/chicago.html). Here we focus on native species, yet include several ubiquitous, non-native species that can be easily mistaken as natives. In order to distinguish plant origins, non-native species are highlighted in red throughout the guide.
### SPECIES LIST

Includes numbered location in guide and photo credits for each image in order from left to right. Photographers include: Sue Auerbach (SA), John & Jane Balaban (JJB), William Burger (WB), Kenneth Dritz (KD), Melanie Gunn (MG), Sharon Shattuck (SS), and Paul Rothrock (PR). Non-native species are labeled in red.

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