

Prairie or FlameLeaf Sumac



There are two varieties of this species, but the one native to Texas is *Rhus lanceolata*. It has a long list of common names—Flame-leaf Sumac, Prairie Sumac, Winged Sumac, and Shining Sumac are the most typical names you’ll see when purchasing it. You can find it at native plant nurseries, or easily propagate it yourself.

Where does it grow?

Sumac prefers sandy loam or loamy soils. If you spot pines, chances are you’ll find this plant nearby. It requires full sun and typically grows at forest edges, along high creek banks, or out in open prairies. It does *not* tolerate flooding, so you won’t find it in floodplains. It’s also known as a prairie invader—Brazos Bend State Park is a great example, where it thrives where the sandy prairie rises. It grows well in Central Texas north to the Fort Worth region.



What does it look like?

This is a handsome plant that can resemble a large shrub or small tree, reaching about 15 feet tall. True to the name “Flame-leaf Sumac,” the foliage turns brilliant red in fall and spreads via underground rhizomes, forming dense clumps over time. Give it well-drained soil and full sun,

and it will perform beautifully, though it may slowly expand into surrounding areas once established. Planting in a raised bed can help contain its suckering habit.



before planting.

Is it edible?

Yes. The berries are edible and often used to make a tart, lemonade-style drink by steeping them like tea. Many people say it's quite refreshing.

Propagation

This species is dioecious—meaning there are male plants and female plants. Both produce flowers, but only the females set fruit. The plant I have at home finally bloomed this year, and unfortunately, it turned out to be male—so no berries. When a plant *is* female, the clusters of red berries are very attractive and persist for a long time. Sumac can be propagated by cuttings or from seed. Seeds benefit from scarification, either by soaking in a weak acid such as vinegar or by gently rubbing them on fine sandpaper

