
Native Shrubs for Mississippi Landscapes



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This publication describes 30 shrub species that are native to Mississippi and can be successfully used in home landscapes. For each shrub species described, we include its native habitats; its flowering, fruit, leaf, and form characteristics; and its wildlife values. We also offer cultural tips and effective landscape uses. While many of these plants tolerate conditions not found in their native environments, it is always preferable to choose plants that are best suited to the site.

Many of these plants are being grown in area wholesale nurseries; ask your local nurseryman about their availability.



RED BUCKEYE

Aesculus pavia L.

Hippocastanaceae

Although red buckeye is a tree form in more northern regions, it is a small deciduous

shrub in zones 7-10. Rarely exceeding 10 feet in height, red buckeye is found growing on the well-drained slopes of creek banks and rivers. Large showy red flower spikes appear on the ends of branches in March and April and are a favorite food source for hummingbirds. Buckeye forms a broad mounding shrub and will form large colonies from root suckers. Often it loses its leaves in midsummer from leaf anthracnose, but the plant is not injured. Red buckeye has handsome palmate (broad, flat, and lobed) compound leaves that turn yellow in the fall. For a naturalistic look, plant buckeye in shrub masses underneath canopy trees.

Sunlight: Part sun to shade
Soil type: Dry to moist
Shrub type: Deciduous
Wildlife value: Medium
Flowering: Spring flowers

TAG ALDER

Alnus serrulata (Ait.)

Willd.

Betulaceae

This tall deciduous shrub can reach 15 feet in height. Tag alder is commonly found in wet acid soils of branch bottoms and flatwoods. Leaves are round in shape and have a fine-toothed edge. This alder produces long, thin “catkin” (resembles a cat’s tail) flowers in late fall, which are conspicuously showy. This shrub has a twisting crooked trunk and makes an excellent



specimen shrub. The seeds are eaten by several bird species, and the stems and leaves are consumed by deer and beaver.

Sunlight: Sun to shade
Soil type: Wet or moist
Shrub type: Deciduous
Wildlife value: Medium
Flowering: Spring flowers

GROUNDSEL BUSH

Baccharis halimifolia L.

Asteraceae

Groundsel bush is a finely branched semi-evergreen shrub that reaches 12 feet in height and is about 6 feet wide. It multiplies in wet marshes, fields, and swamp areas. This shrub has a loose irregular form similar to wax myrtle. It blooms in early fall with numerous billowy white flowers that cover the plant. These flowers are a favorite nectar source for many butterfly species. Tolerant of both salt and freshwater areas, this shrub readily adapts to any sunny site.

Sunlight: Sun to part sun
Soil type: Wet or dry
Shrub type: Semi-evergreen
Wildlife value: High
Flowering: Fall flowers

AMERICAN BEAUTYBERRY

Callicarpa americana L.

Verbenaceae

This fast growing deciduous shrub can reach up to 8 feet in height and almost 6 feet in width. Beautyberry has a broad coarse leaf texture and turns bright yellow in fall. Commonly found at woodland edges and along fencerows, it is tolerant of poor soils. Small rosy flowers appear along the branches in May and form

very showy bright purple fruits in late summer. These fruits are eaten by many species of birds and mammals. Beautyberry has a broad mounding form in full sunlight and is effective in shrub masses or as a specimen plant.

Sunlight: Sun to part shade
Soil type: Dry to moist
Shrub type: Deciduous
Wildlife value: High
Flowering: Showy fall fruit

SWEETSHRUB

Calycanthus floridus L.

Calycanthaceae

Sweetshrub is a medium-sized, upright, deciduous shrub that can reach 8 feet in height and 4 feet in width. It is occasionally found on drier soil types in fertile woodlands and along sandy streams and hillsides. This shrub has an attractive oval leaf with very prominent veins. In the fall, it turns a bright yellow color. Sweetshrub has a sweetly fragrant reddish brown flower in late spring. Few insects or diseases are found on this shrub species. It is effective in masses and in hedgerows in naturalistic settings.

Sunlight: Sun to part shade
Soil type: Dry to moist
Shrub type: Deciduous
Wildlife value: Low
Flowering: Spring flowers

BUTTONBUSH

Cephalanthus occidentalis Linnaeus

Rubiaceae

Buttonbush is a deciduous shrub that grows to 10 feet in height. It is found in wet soils near swamps, ponds, and lakes. This shrub has an interesting open, sprawling form and can occur in colonies. An unusual white globe flower, which is visited by bees and butterflies, is produced throughout the summer. In the fall, the flower forms a round seed head that is eaten by several bird species. This shrub is suitable for shallow water areas at the edges of ponds.

Sunlight: Sun to part sun
Soil type: Wet or dry
Shrub type: Deciduous
Wildlife value: High
Flowering: Summer flowers

FRINGE TREE

Chionanthus virginicus Linnaeus

Oleaceae

Fringe tree is a large deciduous shrub or small tree that grows 20 feet high and 12 feet wide. It is found in upland pine forests on well-drained soil. It has a rounded “shrubby” form and often has



multiple trunks. Fringe tree blooms in spring, with white fringe-like petals that have a slight fragrance. Small blue fruits are produced in late summer and are consumed by numerous birds and wildlife. The large oval leaves have a yellow autumn color. Fringe tree is an excellent specimen tree for the home landscape.

Sunlight: Sun to part sun
Soil type: Dry to moist
Shrub type: Deciduous
Wildlife value: High
Flowering: Spring flowers

SUMMERSWEET

Clethra alnifolia Linnaeus

Clethraceae

Summersweet is a deciduous shrub that averages 6 feet in height and 4 feet in width. It is found in moist acid soils of wet pine savannas, bogs, and swamps. The attractive dark green leaves are toothed and turn yellow in the fall. Fragrant white bloom spikes appear in early summer for several weeks. Summersweet has an upright form with medium textured foliage and is excellent for use in naturalistic settings.



Sunlight: Sun to part sun
Soil type: Wet or dry
Shrub type: Deciduous
Wildlife value: Medium
Flowering: Summer flowers



BUCKWHEAT TREE

Cliftonia monophylla Gaertner

Cyrillaceae

Buckwheat tree is a large evergreen shrub that can reach 20 feet tall and 20 feet wide. It is found in the moist acid soils of swamps, bogs, and wet pinelands. Buckwheat has an upright oval form with multiple trunks. White flower clusters appear at the ends of branches in winter and persist well into spring. Yellow “buckwheat” fruits appear in summer and are somewhat prominent.

Sunlight: Sun to part sun
Soil type: Wet or dry
Shrub type: Evergreen
Wildlife value: Medium
Flowering: Winter flowers

WITCH ALDER

Fothergilla major (Sims) Lodd.

Hamamelidaceae

Witch alder is a deciduous shrub that reaches 8 feet in height and 5 feet in width. It is occasionally found in well-drained acid soils of dry woods. Witch alder has an upright form and is an effective understory shrub in naturalistic settings. The large toothed leaves have a red or orange fall color. Creamy-white bottlebrush flowers have a sweet fragrance and appear in early spring.

Sunlight: **Part shade to shade**

Soil type: **Dry to moist**

Shrub type: **Deciduous**

Wildlife value: **Low**

Flowering: **Spring flowers**

DWARF HUCKLEBERRY

Gaylussacia dumosa
(Andrz.) T & G

Ericaceae



Dwarf huckleberry is a deciduous shrub that averages 4 feet in height and 4 feet in width. It is found in a variety of acid soil woodlands including pine savannas and bogs. This huckleberry has an upright to mounding form and is often sculptural. The small fine-textured leaves turn a brilliant red color in autumn. Small pink flowers bloom in spring and produce small edible huckleberry fruits in early summer. These fruits are prized by a variety of birds and other wildlife.

Sunlight: **Sun to part sun**

Soil type: **Dry to wet**

Shrub type: **Deciduous**

Wildlife value: **High**

Fruit: **Summer fruits**

WITCH HAZEL

Hamamelis virginiana L.

Hamamelidaceae

Witch hazel is a large deciduous shrub or a small tree that may reach 15 feet tall. It is found in a variety of rich woodlands and along streambanks. The large scalloped leaves are attractive in summer and produce a yellow autumn color. The shrub has strap-like yellow flower petals that are fragrant and bloom from fall into winter. Witch hazel has a spreading sculptural form and is effective in the landscape as an understory specimen plant.

Sunlight: **Sun or shade**

Soil type: **Dry to moist**

Shrub type: **Deciduous**

Wildlife value: **Low**

Flowering: **Winter flowers**

OAKLEAF HYDRANGEA

Hydrangea quercifolia Bartram

Hydrangeaceae

An excellent deciduous shrub with many ornamental qualities, oakleaf hydrangea grows to 6 feet tall and 4 feet wide. This species is found in fertile well-drained woodlands of the state. The leaves are large and oak-like and turn a rich purple color in the fall. Oakleaf hydrangea produces large, creamy-white flower heads in late spring. It is an excellent specimen plant for shady areas under trees in well-drained soil conditions.

Sunlight: **Part shade to shade**

Soil type: **Well-drained, fertile**

Shrub type: **Deciduous**

Wildlife value: **Low**

Flowering: **Spring flowers**

BIGLEAF GALLBERRY HOLLY

Ilex coriacea (Pursh)

Chapman

Aquifoliaceae



A large evergreen shrub that can reach 15 feet in height, bigleaf gallberry holly is native to wetland soils of pine flatwoods, swamp edges, and bogs. This holly tends to be upright in form with multiple stems. It makes an excellent hedge or barrier plant. Large shiny black fruits are produced in fall and winter. These holly fruits are used by a number of birds and small mammals. It is a good, tough holly that is tolerant of many extreme environments.

Sunlight: **Sun to part sun**

Soil type: **Wet or dry**

Shrub type: **Evergreen**

Wildlife value: **High**

Fruits: **Winter fruits**



WINTERBERRY HOLLY

Ilex verticillata (L.) Gray

Aquifoliaceae

Winterberry holly is a deciduous shrub that can grow 10 feet high and 6 feet wide. It has an open wide-spreading form with upright branches. This holly is found in wet woods, bogs, and along sides of streams. Female plants produce a large red winter fruit that persists well through winter. Nearby male plants are required for fruit set. It is an excellent specimen plant for courtyards and gardens.

Sunlight: **Sun to part sun**

Soil type: **Wet or dry**

Shrub type: **Deciduous**
Wildlife value: **High**
Fruits: **Winter fruits**

STAR ANISE

Illicium floridanum Ell.

Illicaceae

Star anise is an evergreen shrub that can grow 8 feet high and 6 feet wide. It usually grows in dense thickets along streambanks and moist woods. Star anise has an upright oval form with deep green leaves of coarse texture. The leaves are heavily scented and noticeable when encountered. Deep maroon starry flowers cover the plant in early spring. Star anise is a good landscape plant for shady well-drained or moist soils.

Sunlight: **Shade to part shade**
Soil type: **Dry to moist**
Shrub type: **Evergreen**
Wildlife value: **Low**
Flowering: **Spring flowers**

VIRGINIA SWEETSPIRE

Itea virginica L.

Iteaceae

A deciduous shrub that grows 5 feet high and 3 feet wide, sweetspire is found along stream edges and swamps. It has an upright to spreading form with multiple stems. The medium-textured leaves turn a deep wine red in autumn. Fragrant white flower clusters appear at the ends of branches in April and May. This shrub is tolerant of many different garden conditions. Several cultivars are available.

Sunlight: **Sun to part sun**
Soil type: **Dry or wet**
Shrub type: **Deciduous**
Wildlife value: **Medium**
Flowering: **Spring flowers**



MOUNTAIN LAUREL

Kalmia latifolia L.

Ericaceae

Mountain laurel is an evergreen shrub that often reaches 10 feet in height and in width. It grows on the slopes of rivers and creek banks across the eastern United States. Mountain laurel has an open broad-spreading form with multiple branches. The foliage is dark green, medium textured, and slow

growing. Exquisite white or pink wheel-shaped flowers cover the plant in spring. Mature plants exhibit an attractive reddish brown exfoliating bark.

Sunlight: **Shade to part shade**
Soil type: **Dry to moist**
Shrub type: **Evergreen**
Wildlife value: **Low**
Flowering: **Spring flowers**

LEUCOTHOE

Leucothoe axillaris (Lam.) D. Don

Ericaceae

Leucothoe is a small evergreen shrub that grows to 3 feet in height and in width. It is a low-spreading shrub with arching and loosely formed stems. It grows in wet acid soils near swamps, bogs, and creek beds. Small, white, fragrant flowers cluster along the flower stem from late winter to mid-spring. This evergreen shrub can get leaf spot. It may be best suited to coastal areas.

Sunlight: **Part sun to shade**
Soil type: **Dry or wet**
Shrub type: **Evergreen**
Wildlife value: **Low**
Flowering: **Spring flowers**

LYONIA

Lyonia lucida (Lam.) Koch

Ericaceae

This evergreen shrub averages 3 feet in height and spread. Found growing along well-drained sandy woodlands and streams, it is widely tolerant of many growing conditions. Small, nodding, bell-shaped white flowers cluster along the stems in late spring. Lyonia has a low mounding form with arching branches. Caterpillars are associated with lyonia but do not cause major injury. It may perform best in coastal areas.

Sunlight: **Part sun to shade**
Soil type: **Dry or moist**
Shrub type: **Evergreen**
Wildlife value: **Low**
Flowering: **Spring flowers**



AMERICAN SWEET OLIVE

Osmanthus americanus
(L.) Gray
Oleaceae



An evergreen shrub that reaches up to 20 feet in height and 10 feet in width, American sweet olive is the native version of the more common Asian species. Found in dry acid soils of pinelands, this shrub has an oval open form. Rather than blooming in winter as the Chinese sweet olive does, this native plant blooms in early spring. Small white flowers bloom on new wood and are not as heavily fragrant as the common ornamental. This shrub has few problems or pests and is useful as a hedge or screen.

Sunlight: **Sun to part shade**
Soil type: **Dry or moist**
Shrub type: **Evergreen**
Wildlife value: **Low**
Flowering: **Spring flowers**



YELLOW NATIVE AZALEA

Rhododendron austrinum
(Sm.) Rehd.
Ericaceae

This magnificent deciduous shrub grows 12 feet tall and 8 feet wide. Native to rich well-drained woodlands along streams and rivers, it performs best in morning sun or filtered light. Rich yellow or orange fragrant blossoms appear for 3 weeks in April and May. Yellow native azalea is sensitive to wet or poorly drained soil types, but it has few other problems. Many cultivars are available that exhibit different flower forms and colors.

Sunlight: **Part sun to shade**
Soil type: **Dry to moist soils**
Shrub type: **Deciduous**
Wildlife value: **Low**
Flowering: **Spring flowers**

HONEYSUCKLE AZALEA

Rhododendron canescens (Michx.) Sweet
Ericaceae

Honeysuckle azalea is a beautiful deciduous shrub that grows 12 feet high and 8 feet wide. This azalea is widely found along streambanks and rivers of the state. It performs best in a filtered light; the foliage tends to burn in full sun. Large fragrant flower clusters range from pure white to dark pink and bloom from late March to early April. This azalea is more adaptive of soil types

than the yellow native azalea, and there are many cultivar types available.

Sunlight: **Part sun to shade**
Soil type: **Dry to moist soils**
Shrub type: **Deciduous**
Wildlife value: **Low**
Flowering: **Spring flowers**

SUMMER AZALEA

Rhododendron serrulatum (Sm.) Mill.
Ericaceae

Summer azalea is a deciduous shrub that grows to 15 feet in height and about 10 feet in width. Native to flood plains along streams, this azalea is tolerant of wet soils. Rather than blooming in spring as other azaleas, this species blooms from June through August with extremely fragrant white flowers. It tolerates and blooms well in heavily shaded locations.

Sunlight: **Part shade to shade**
Soil type: **Moist to wet soils**
Shrub type: **Deciduous**
Wildlife value: **Low**
Flowering: **Summer flowers**

STAGHORN SUMAC

Rhus typhina L.
Anacardiaceae

Staghorn sumac is a tall deciduous shrub that reaches 20 feet in height and width. It grows in dry soil types along roadsides and in fields and pastures. The long pinnate (feather-shaped) leaves are attractive and turn a bright orange or red in autumn. Green flower clusters appear on the plant in early summer and mature to rich red fruits in late summer. They often persist through winter. This is a tough and versatile shrub for difficult soil types. It often forms broad colonies through root suckering.

Sunlight: **Sun to part sun**
Soil type: **Dry to moist**
Shrub type: **Deciduous**
Wildlife value: **High**
Fruits: **Late summer fruits**



DWARF PALMETTO

Sabal minor (Jacq.) Pers.
Arecaceae

This versatile evergreen shrub grows 6 feet high and 4 feet

wide. Found primarily in river flood plains, this shrub can grow in a wide variety of wet or dry soil types. Dwarf palmetto has a tropical leaf and is an excellent understory shrub, ground cover, or focal plant. Round black fruits appear on long stems in late summer and persist through winter. Few insects or diseases are associated with this species.

Sunlight: Sun to shade
Soil type: Dry or wet
Shrub type: Evergreen
Wildlife value: Medium
Fruits: Late summer fruits

SNOWBELL

Styrax americanus Lam.

Styracaceae

A little known deciduous shrub, snowbell grows to 10 feet high and 6 feet wide. It is found in wet soils of bottomland hardwood forests and along stream edges. It has numerous small white flowers that bloom from April through May. It typically has an upright oval form.



Sunlight: Sun to part sun
Soil type: Wet or moist
Shrub type: Deciduous
Wildlife value: Medium
Flowering: Spring flowers

TREE HUCKLEBERRY

Vaccinium arboreum Marshall

Ericaceae

This large semi-evergreen shrub reaches 20 feet in height and 15 feet in width. It is found in a wide range of woodland types from dry sandy soils to moist stream edges. Small bell-shaped white flowers appear on the plant from April through May and are followed by small black fruits in early fall. The fruits are highly used by song and game birds, deer, and many small mammals. Because of this plant's upright form, it can be used as a small ornamental tree. It has an attractive peeling red bark. Huckleberries and blueberries produce a strong red leaf color in the fall.

Sunlight: Sun to part sun
Soil type: Dry to moist
Shrub type: Semi-evergreen
Wildlife value: High
Flowering: Spring flowers
Fruits: Summer fruits



ELLIOTT'S BLUEBERRY

Vaccinium elliotii Chapm.

Ericaceae

This wild blueberry is a deciduous shrub that grows to 12 feet in height and 12 feet wide. It grows in open pinelands, marshy edges, and along streams and roadsides. Small white blueberry flowers

bloom from March through May and are followed by small edible black fruits in early summer. The shrub has a loose rounded form and often exhibits bright green stems. The green leaves are small and turn bright red in the fall. It has few insect or disease problems.

Sunlight: Sun to part sun
Soil type: Moist to wet
Shrub type: Deciduous
Wildlife value: High
Flowering: Spring flowers
Fruits: Summer fruits

ARROW-WOOD VIBURNUM

Viburnum dentatum L.

Caprifoliaceae

Arrow-wood viburnum is a large deciduous shrub that reaches 20 feet in height and 10 feet in width. It is found in acid soils of the state, in the moist soils of swamp forests and floodplains, but it is also well adapted to many soil types. Arrow-wood has an attractive toothed leaf that turns yellow and red in late fall. White flower clusters appear in March through May, and are followed by numerous blue fruits in late summer. Many birds and mammals use these fruits. The narrow upright forms of long thin branches make it a useful shrub for narrow beds and courtyard plantings.



Sunlight: Sun to part sun
Soil type: Dry to wet
Shrub type: Deciduous
Wildlife value: High
Flowering: Spring
Fruits: Summer fruits



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Publication 2334

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. **JOE H. MCGILBERRY**, Director (1.5M-8-04)