PLANT FACT SHEET

Rhus typhina L.

GENUS *Rhus* **FAMILY** Anacardiaceae

COMMON NAMES Staghorn sumac, Indian lemonade, Velvet sumach, Vinegar tree, Virginian sumach

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Leaves, Seeds

The very sour fruit are used in pies or soaked in water to produce a drink.
The fruit are dried and the red skin removed by rubbing on a sieve and the powder is used as the seasoning sumac. This is used to flavour rice.

DESCRIPTION

A shrub which grows 3-4.5 m high and 3.7-6 m wide. It loses its leaves during the year. The trunk can be 10 cm across. It develops suckers. Young stems have a velvet coating of red-brown hairs. The leaves are large and have leaflets along the stalk. There are 11-31 leaflets on a reddish and densely hairy central stalk. The leaflets are sword shaped and in pairs. They are 5-12 cm long. The central ones are largest. The leaves are dark green above and paler underneath. Male and female flowers occur on separate plants. The flowers are small and greenish-yellow. They occur in large dense clusters at the tip of a shoot. The male or pollen flowers are in clusters about 30 cm long. The female plants have fruit in dense clusters. They are dark crimson and hairy. They are 3-5 mm across and have a single seed.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It is native to North America. It is frost hardy. They grow in open places on sandy and rocky soils. It needs good light. It suits hardiness zones 3-9.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Root sprouts develop near the base. These suckers can be used for planting. Plants can also be grown by layering. Woody cuttings will grow. Plants can be pruned heavily. Plants can also be grown by seeds.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees live to 50 years old.

NOTES

There are about 200 Rhus species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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