

“Viburnum, a Native Plant”

by Sally Cureton

One of our most dependable and interesting native plants is the viburnum. Viburnums produce many fragrant white flowers in the spring, maintain glossy green leaves during the summer months and provide colorful autumn foliage. Members of the honeysuckle family, they are sturdy shrubs, easy to grow and hardy. There are several types, Wild Raisin, Nannyberry, Rusty Black Haw, Roughish Arrowwood, Smooth Arrowwood, and Cranberrytree. The most common one in this area is the Maple Leaf Viburnum, a smooth arrowwood.

Maple Leaf Viburnum not only has maple-like leaves, but its scientific name is derived from the Maple tree. *Acer* is the genus of the maple tree so the maple leaf viburnum's scientific name is *Viburnum Acerfolium*. The plant grows from Quebec south to Florida, and west to Tennessee and Michigan. Because it spreads primarily through via rhizomes, underground, it tends to form clumps or thickets where it is established. Individual plants will be 4 to 5 feet high and 3 to 4 feet wide.

This attractive plant will grow in a wide range of light and soil conditions. Although it does best in well-drained, moist soils with partial shade, it is extremely adaptable. Because it also thrives in dry soils and deep shade, it is perfect for our Massanutten growing conditions. We have several of these plants in the Rockingham Springs Arboretum, which gets very little sun. The leaves are deciduous, 2-5 inches wide, deeply lobed with coarse teeth on the edges. Flowers are small, creamy-white and grow in flat-topped clusters 1-3 inches wide.

Maple Leaf Viburnum is a valuable wildlife plant providing good nesting and cover for birds and small mammals. The berries are eaten by a wide variety of wildlife including deer, rabbit, chipmunks, squirrels, mice, skunks, and most songbirds. As a plant that has only minor insect or disease problems, it can make an excellent addition to any landscape. It is especially nice in the fall with a wonderful purplish-pink leaf color. It can be used for borders or screens in small groups or as a specimen plant.