

NON-NATIVE VIBURNUMS THRIVE IN WELL-DRAINED, SANDY LOAMS

By Douglas Chapman, Horticulturist, Dow Gardens, Midland, MI

Non-native Viburnums also thrive in our landscapes. In fact, several of these non-native Viburnums are used more than our natives. The most important and exciting of the imported Viburnums include *Viburnum carlesii*, *V. X burkwoodii*, *V. opulus*, *V. plicatum tomentosum*, *V. rhytidophyllum*, and *V. sargentii*. All of these imports essentially thrive in fertile, well-drained soil. In fact, the key to growing many Viburnums is a well-drained, sandy loam soil. They will all adapt to a wide range of pH, but the optimal pH is 6.0.

Koreanspice Viburnum (*V. carlesii*) is a native of Korea. It is a rounded shrub, reaching 4 to 5 feet in height and width. The habit is somewhat stiff, upward spreading, and it has a rather coarse texture. Its rate of growth is slow. Koreanspice Viburnum should be considered a small specimen shrub. It is one of the earliest to flower, flowering in late April or early May in central Michigan. The buds are good, dark pink, opening to a 2 to 3 inch diameter white flower. The flowers



reach their peak when the leaves are about one-half expanded or about a week after *V. X burkwoodii* flowers. Koreanspice is extremely fragrant and a tremendous understory specimen or specimen plant in intimate landscapes. The fruit matures during August and September. It grows into small, fine drupes two-fifths of an inch in diameter, with the red color changing to black at maturity. The foliage is a dull pubescent green throughout the summer, becoming red to maroon in the fall. Often, single branches will develop fall color and not the entire plant. Further, fall foliage color development is not dependable in Central Michigan. *V. carlesii* does have problems with borers and should be considered either a short-lived plant or grown only under optimal conditions.

Burkwood Viburnum (*V. X burkwoodii*) is an exciting small- to medium-sized shrub. Its shrubby habit is upright oval and multi-stemmed, reaching 8 to 9 feet in height and 5 to 7 feet in width. It grows much faster than *V. carlesii* and shows little or no borer problems. The leaves are narrow and pointed, about 1½ to 2 inches long. The summer color is a lustrous dark green with fall color remaining essentially the same. In fact, as far north as Central Michigan, *V. X burkwoodii* is semi-evergreen and, therefore, fall color is little or non-existent. When considering flowers, Burkwood Viburnum is the first of the Viburnums to flower in the spring, either in late April or early May just prior to *V. carlesii*. The bud is pink and becomes a slight pink cast when the flower is in full bloom. Burkwood Viburnum is an annual flower; the entire plant is covered with these terminally borne fragrant flowers. The fruit matures in late August, turning from red to black, with little or no ornamental value. Although diseases—crown gall, leaf spot, powdery mildew, and shoot blight—can be a problem, only the latter is a significant concern. *V. X burkwoodii* is exciting as an understory screen or mass planting for large areas or as a specimen in intimate landscapes. Its semi-evergreen characteristics give a unique texture and exciting green color throughout much of the fall—a truly outstanding plant.

European Cranberrybush Viburnum (*V. opulus*) is native to Europe and Northern Asia. The leaves are



Koreanspice Viburnum (top) is one of the earliest to flower but has problems with borers.

European Cranberrybush Viburnum (bottom) is one of the most dependable viburnums regarding fall color.

simple-toothed, 3 to 4 inches long and wide, and similar to *V. trilobum*. The summer color is a good glossy green with a dull red developing often in the fall. It must be stressed that *V. trilobum* is considerably more dependable and spectacular when judging fall color. *V. opulus*'s habit of growth is a multiple-stemmed shrub, reaching 8 to 12 feet in height and 10 to 12 feet in width with a somewhat arching, rounded habit, where as *V. trilobum* is considerably more upright. European Cranberrybush has a medium rate of growth. It is used extensively in large and small area landscapes for shrub borders, as individual specimens, or screens. The flowers are an exciting white flower in the spring, similar to *V. trilobum*, with the sterile flowers surrounding the small fertile flowers. The druping red fruit develop in September and persist throughout much of the winter. One truly outstanding cultivar is the yellow fruiting form *V. opulus* 'Xanthocarpum'.

Doublefile Viburnum (*V. plicatum tomentosum*) is a truly outstanding import, native to China and Japan. It has almost horizontal branches that surround a central stem, giving one a layered feeling, similar to the habit of *Cornus florida*. At maturity it often reaches 8 to 12 feet in height and width with the shrub being a little wider than tall. Leaves are serrated-lobed oval, 2 to 4 inches, medium in texture, and dark green throughout the summer with consistent maroon to purplish-red fall color. Fall color is so outstanding that Doublefile Viburnum should be considered the showiest of all non-native Viburnum. The flowers grow 2 to 4 inches in diameter with large white, sterile flowers surrounding small yellow fertile inner flowers. Fruit of Doublefile Viburnum matures earlier than all the Viburnum, usually during late July or early August. It ranges in color from red at bloom to black at full maturity. *V. plicatum tomentosum* prefers fertile, well-drained soil. It is outstanding as a specimen plant for large area or home landscapes. Doublefile is a good understory plant or companion with Chokecherry or deep-rooted trees. This truly regal import should be used more extensively in the landscape.

Leatherleaf Viburnum (*V. rhytidophyllum*) is a multiple-stemmed shrub 10 to 15 feet in height and 8 to 10 feet in width. The simple, opposite oval leaves reach 3 to 7 inches in length and are dark green in the summer, giving a somewhat coarse texture. Leatherleaf Viburnum is a semi-evergreen; therefore, fall color rarely develops. The yellow-white flowers which develop in mid-May reach 4 to 8 inches in diameter. The red to black 1/3-inch long fruit is not effective in the general landscape situation. Leatherleaf Viburnum is an aggressive multiple-stemmed shrub. Often in northern areas, which include northern Ohio or Michigan, it will be killed to the ground but dependably comes back from the roots. This outstanding plant is good in mass plantings, and as screens or border shrubs. It thrives in shady, protected areas and is compatible with ericaceous plantings, e.g., Rhododendrons.

Sargent Viburnum (*V. sargentii*) is native to northern Asia. This rounded, multiple-stemmed shrub reaches 12 to 15 feet in height and width and has a somewhat coarse texture. The white flowers differ from *V. opulus* in that the anthers are purple as op-

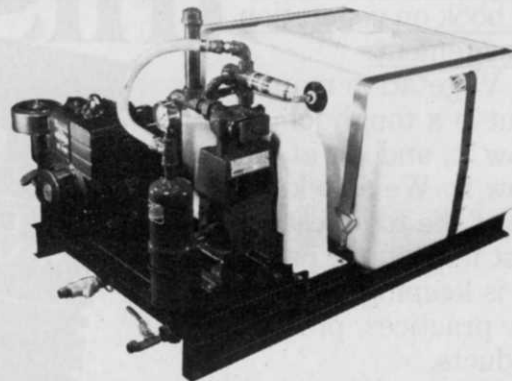
posed to yellow for *V. opulus*. The two-fifths-inch scarlet fruit is effective in early August. The leaf is similar to *V. opulus* yet thicker and somewhat coarser. Sargent Viburnum is certainly a specimen or works well as a screen or mass planting.

When planning to use deciduous shrubs in the landscape, Viburnums should be considered. Although the imported Viburnums are used more often, in general, any of our native Viburnums have less insect and disease problems while integrating into natural landscapes as an understory shrub or small tree. *V. trilobum* with less insect and disease problems; *V. prunifolium* with its outstanding fall color and fruit; and *V. lentago* with its exceptional summer leaf and fall color should be considered in almost any landscape. Of the non-natives, certainly Doublefile Viburnum (*V. plicatum tomentosum*) is the outstanding individual. It has a unique sympodial habit of growth, showy flowers, and outstanding fall color. Of the smaller shrubs, *V. X burkwoodii* should be considered, since it's a semi-evergreen and multiple-stemmed with extremely showy flowers. Viburnums are a must in almost any landscape from industrial to home. They are low maintenance, have few insect and disease problems, and are tolerant of many pollutants.

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