

July Tree and Shrub of the Month

This month's trees and shrub of the month are Shumard Oak and Blackhaw Viburnum. Both of these plants are native to Montgomery County and perform well in our demanding landscape conditions. Let us take a deeper look at what makes these two plants worth using.

Shumard Oak/*Quercus shumardii*

Shumard Oak is one of the many native oaks that make a great landscape tree. It grows quickly and develops into a beautiful shade tree to enjoy on our hot summer days. Shumard Oak typically grows to a size of 70' tall and 50' wide, but has the ability to grow larger. Shumard Oak should be planted in full sun and is extremely adaptable to soils. It performs well on clay soil and makes it an excellent choice for new construction and home sites. Other than providing a great source of shade, Shumard Oak also has other great qualities. In the fall, the leaves turn a brilliant red to red-orange, and the acorns that are produced are a great source for wildlife food.

Shumard Oak is a good all-around tree. Although this tree is underused in the landscape, Shumard Oak has many qualities that warrant using it more in our landscapes. It is a very urban tolerant native tree that can withstand the many stresses that are thrown at it. When you go searching for your next shade tree, consider Shumard Oak, or one of the other fine oak tree selections that are available.

Blackhaw Viburnum/*Viburnum prunifolium*

Blackhaw Viburnum is another one of those great native shrubs that are so sadly underused. This viburnum has

so many great qualities, but continuously goes overlooked by nurserymen and homeowners. Blackhaw Viburnum will develop into a large shrub, typically 10-15' tall and 8-10' wide. If one is so inclined, it can also be pruned into a very attractive small tree. Blackhaw Viburnum will be just as happy in full sun as it is in full shade, which adds to its versatility. It prefers a soil that is well drained, so make sure you keep it out of the wet part of your yard. I have grown this plant in clay soils and it has performed admirably once established. Blackhaw Viburnum has attractive white flower heads in the spring, which develop into attractive fruit in the fall that wildlife relish. The leaves hold a nice darker green color throughout the summer, and when fall arrives, the show begins. The leaves turn a brilliant bright to maroon red that is stunning. I cherish this plant every year for its fall color display.

There are many ways that you can incorporate Blackhaw Viburnum into your landscape. It can hold its own when planted as a specimen shrub, but it also performs well as a screening plant. Many times I have utilized this beautiful large shrub to screen out an undesirable view from a homeowner's yard. With as many great qualities that this plant has to offer, there is no reason that Blackhaw Viburnum should not be utilized in our landscapes with more regularity. This shrub has great 3-season interest and will never leave you disappointed. It is very easy to grow and care for, and is not typically bothered by any serious problems. In my opinion, Blackhaw Viburnum is an absolutely wonderful plant that justifies its greater use. As

nurserymen, landscapers, and homeowners, we need to diversify our landscapes with plants such as this, and not be content with the same old plants we see used over and over. The possibilities that await are endless.