
SUNNYSIDE THYMES

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Know Your Natives

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Native Shrubs - Part 2

Why toil over a beautiful garden, when you can create one just as beautiful with lower maintenance and a meaningful and positive impact on the environment? The answer is, of course, plant natives, which readily adapt to soil and weather conditions, are typically non-evasive, and support our pollinators and wildlife. Native shrubs, as anchor plants, are a good place to begin in your garden. Here are three great options to get you started.

Arrowwood Viburnum *Viburnum dentatum* is an upright, rounded, multi-stemmed deciduous shrub in the honeysuckle family.

Native Americans reportedly used the straight stems of this species for arrow shafts, hence the common name.

This shrub is easily grown in average, medium moisture, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade, but will tolerate a wide range of soils and fairly drought tolerant. It grows to a height of 6-10

feet with a similar spread. Non-fragrant creamy-white flowers (2-4 inches in diameter) appear in late spring, giving way to blue-black drupes which attract birds. Glossy dark green toothed leaves turn yellow to wine-red in fall. Arrowwood Viburnum provides food, cover, and nesting sites for birds, and larval food for butterflies and moths. It is a hardy, vigorous, and reliable choice in your yard.

Common Ninebark *Physocarpus opulifolius* is a deciduous flowering shrub, a member of the rose family. Ninebark gets its name from its unique exfoliating bark, which peels back in thin layers as its branches mature. It is a great choice for year-round

interest. Spring blooms in white to pink clusters resembling Spirea. Depending on the variety, summer shows yellow, green or reddish leaves. Autumn offers red berries attracting birds. Ninebark is a fast-growing shrub, reaching 5-10 feet tall and 6-8 feet wide. It is easy to care for, tolerating just about all soil types and

weather conditions in zones 2-8. This shrub prefers full sun to part shade, but will flower best in full sun. Ninebark can be pruned fairly aggressively after flowering (blooms on old wood) to maintain its cascading, mounded shape. Overall, Ninebark is a very versatile, native shrub that bees, butterflies, and birds love.

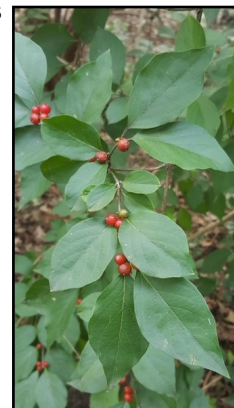
Spicebush *Lindera benzoin*, part of the Laurel family and often called the “forsythia of the wilds,” is a broad, rounded multi-stemmed shrub covered with fragrant yellow-green flowers in early spring. The flowers open before the leaves emerge and are held close to the branches. Aromatic light green leaves turn deep yellow-gold in fall, emitting a pleasant lemon scent, which can be made into a tea. This adaptable shrub grows about 6 feet high and wide, but may reach 10 feet in favorably moist locations. Spicebush grows best in moderate, medium wet, well-drained soil. It will thrive in shade and part-shade conditions, but fall colors are best in



Common Ninebark
Virginia Extension
Photo: Elaine Mills



Arrowwood flowers.
Univ. of Illinois



North Carolina Extension Photo:

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sunny areas. This shrub is dioecious, meaning both male and female flowers appear on different plants. The flowers of the male spicebush are slightly showier occurring in larger clusters. Although inedible for humans, birds love to feed on the small, waxy red fruits that form on female plants. The larva of the spicebush swallowtail butterfly feeds on the leaves

Resources

- <https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org>
 - www.thespruce.com
 - <https://www.backyardecology.net>
 - https://grownative.org/native_plants/ninebark/
 - www.gonative.org
 - <https://www.heraldbulletin.com/opinion/on-nature-column-spicebush-is-a-shrub-for-all-seasons/article>
 - <https://www.arboday.org/trees/treeguide/TreeDetail.cfm?ItemID=931>
 - https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=vide
 - Sorenson, Sharon . *Planting Native to attract Birds to Your Yard*. Stackpole Books: Lanham, Maryland, 2018.
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