

## **My Favorite Shrubs for Plantings**

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Over the years we have planted a number of shrubs in various reforestation, wildlife enhancement and stream restoration projects. Small growing, multi-stemmed shrubs have many desirable qualities in that they can be used in smaller growing spaces, provide dense cover for birds and other animals, create a transition zone between a high forest community and a field, do not encroach on agricultural crops like a large growing tree, produce berries and other fruits, and many have beautiful blooms that enhance the landscape.

Despite their many virtues, in my experience, shrubs are harder to establish than most trees. This probably has to do with the fact that they don't grow as fast as young trees or get as large so they are more prone to suffer losses from animals like deer, mice and voles, and weed competition. What seems to enhance survivorship is to enclose the shrub in a protective device like a tree shelter for a couple of years, then remove the shelter during the late spring to allow the shrub to attain its proper form. (The shrub will have a spindly shape in the shelter. After the shelter is removed judicious pruning may be in order to allow the shrub to support itself.) In addition I have noticed that some shrubs tend to grow faster and survive better than others. These have become my favorite shrubs. Here are a list of my favorite shrubs with some of their characteristics and growth habits. There are still many species that I have no experience or limited experience with so this is not exhaustive; but if you are planning a planting project you might want to incorporate some of these varieties in it to help ensure success.

### **Arrow-Wood Viburnum**

Arrow-wood viburnum (*Viburnum dentatum*) is a very common naturally occurring shrub in Frederick County and it can often be found in moist, well-drained sites throughout the region. Arrow-wood is a medium sized multi-stemmed shrub that grows to a height of 10-12' tall. The shrub thrives in a variety of soils but prefers moist, well-drained sites and it needs partial sunlight to thrive. Arrow-wood can be found in the north-eastern part of the United States and Southern Canada. Arrow-wood gets its name from the fact that Native Americans often used the straight growing stem of this plant as arrow shafts.

Arrow-wood has a single deciduous leaf that has opposite branching structure. It flowers in early summer and bears fruit in the fall. The fall fruits make excellent food for birds at a time of year when food is less than plentiful. Arrow-wood has dense growth characteristics and very few insect or disease pests affect its health. As such, arrow-wood has become an important cultivar seeing a lot of landscape plantings for screens and wildlife plantings. The attractive flowers are an additional benefit.

In my experience arrow-wood grows best in moist areas (not swampy) where it receives partial sunlight or moderate shade. I like planting it next to a woods edge and not out in direct sunlight. It grows fast, survives well, and produces a lot of berries within about 2-3 years time.

Note: Other favorite shrubs that will be featured in future postings include Chokeberry, Crabapple, Eastern Red Cedar, Elderberry, Hazel Alder, Hazelnut, Common Ninebark, American Plum, Eastern Redbud, and Silky Dogwood.