

Physocarpus opulifolius  
Common or Eastern Ninebark

Tried and True  
Native Plant Selections  
for the Mid-Atlantic

Ninebark provides seasonal interest with showy flowers, winter-persistent fruits, and attractive bark, which molts in thin strips on older branches to expose reddish to light brown underlayers. Found throughout much of the Mid-Atlantic,\* this drought-tolerant, adaptable shrub grows in open woods, river and stream banks, and rock outcroppings.



Shrub	Shrubs, Flowers, Fruit, Fall Foliage**
Height: 3–10 feet	 
Spread: 6–10 feet	
Bloom Color: White or pink	 
Characteristics	
Upright, oval, multi-stemmed, deciduous shrub	
Alternate, palmately 3–5-lobed, ovate, toothed leaves	
Domed, flower clusters (corymbs) May to July	
Pointed, inflated, glabrous or stellate-pubescent, ovoid red follicles*** mature to reddish brown and persist all winter	
Fall foliage: yellow/bronze (species), varies (cultivars)	
Graceful, arching branches with peeling bark	
Attributes	
Tolerates clay soil, dry soil, rocky soil, drought, and erosion; no serious pests or diseases	
Deer rarely-to-seldom severely damage	
Mature branches display exfoliating bark in winter	
Easily grown, resilient; “...once established, requires a bulldozer for removal.” (Dirr, 1997)	
Attracts numerous pollinators and birds	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
Soil Requirements: Average, well-drained	Berberis thunbergii - Japanese Barberry
Light Requirements: Sun, Partial Shade	Elaeagnus umbellata - Autumn Olive
Water Requirements: Dry, Moist	Spiraea japonica - Japanese Spirea
Prune directly after bloom (flowers on old growth); remove old canes of settled plants at base late winter	<p>*It is native to DC and MD and is historical in the DE Piedmont. It grows throughout the middle and southern parts of PA. In VA, it is frequent to common in the mountains, infrequent to locally common in the Piedmont, and rare in the Coastal Plains.</p> <p>**Shrub (top right) and foliage are compact cultivar ‘Summer Wine.’</p> <p>***Some sources label Physocarpus fruit as a capsule, but Flora of Virginia describes it as a follicle “dehiscent on both sutures.”</p>
Use in beds, borders, or as a hedge or screen	
Hardiness: USDA Zones 2-7 (maybe 8)	

developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria

Images by Elaine Mills, U.S. National Arboretum, Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, and Longwood Gardens



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