

## Information Sheet – Flameleaf Sumac (*Rhus copallina*)

Flameleaf Sumac (*Rhus copallina*) is a large, deciduous shrub or small tree that can eventually grow to a height of 20-35 feet, with short, crooked trunks and an open branching habit. This shrub is often planted as an ornamental because of its glossy, dark-green compound leaves, which turn a beautiful deep red in the fall.



This attractive shrub is also known for its pyramidal fruit clusters. These fruit clusters, which turn red and persist throughout the winter, provide food for many upland game birds and songbirds.



### Care of your shrub or small tree:

It is important to get your shrub off to a good start by planting it properly in accordance with the instructions on the reverses of this sheet. After planting, maintain a grass and weed-free area around the base of the young shrub. Use organic mulch around the base of the trees approximately three feet out from the trunk. Pine bark and pine needle mulches are very good, straight wood mulch is not. Avoid the use of non-organic mulches, which can cause the soil around the shrub to stay excessively wet. Also avoid the use of black plastic or fabric weed barrier in landscape beds or borders, which may interfere with air exchange into and out of the root system through the soil and contribute to surface rooting.

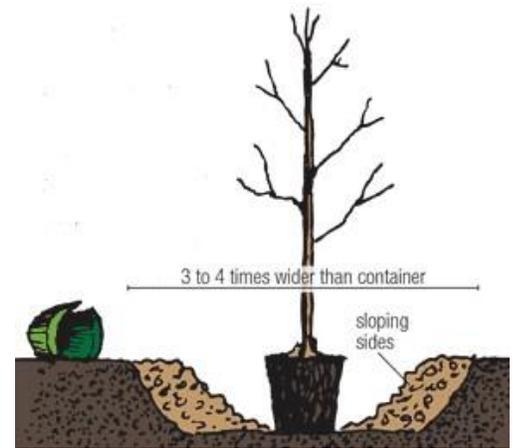
It is also important to pay careful attention to the proper watering of your shrub. Give your shrub three gallons of water at planting time, and again the following day to thoroughly settle the soil and eliminate large air pockets. Water newly planted shrubs every other day for the first two weeks after planting. After the first two weeks, continue watering once a week during the first three years if there has not been an inch of rain during the preceding week.

Watering is not required during the winter months unless the weather is particularly dry. **Please note that watering deeply once a week rather than watering lightly multiple times a week is important to the survival and health of your shrub/small tree, as it encourages the tree to grow deeper roots and become a more drought-resistant tree once established.**

You should also be sure to avoid lawn mower and string trimmer (“weed whacker”) damage to the base of your tree, as this bark damage stresses the tree and makes it more vulnerable to insect and disease attack. Extensive string trimmer damage can cause a loss of vigor, decline, or even death, as cutting through the phloem or xylem right underneath the protective bark can disrupt the flow of water, nutrients, and sugars throughout the tree.

## Planting Instructions:

1. Dig a hole 3 to 4 times wider than the container. The hole should have sloping sides like a saucer to allow for proper root growth. The depth of the hole should be the same as the height of the rootball.



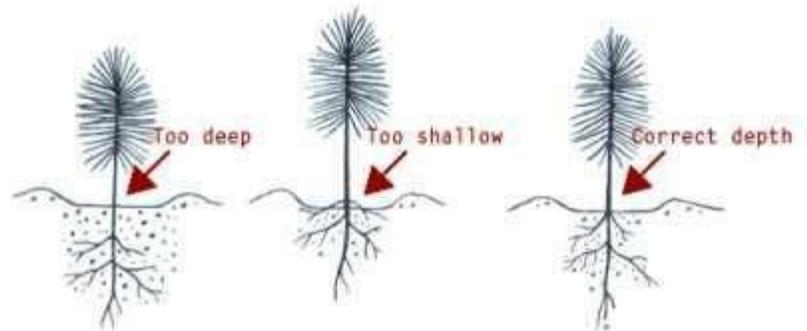
2. Lay the tree/shrub on its side and carefully remove the tree from the container, keeping the soil around the roots intact. It helps to tap the outside of the container.

3. If the root ball comes out of the pot as a solid mass and roots appear to be “circling”, score them with a sharp tool. Cut an X across the bottom of the root ball and four vertical slices along the sides about 1 inch deep. Gently work some of these roots loose. Do not let the roots dry out. Roots should be relatively loose so they can grow quickly into the surrounding soil. Look for and carefully prune away roots that cross over the main trunk or are growing in the ‘wrong direction’. If the roots are not circling and the tree comes out of the pot with loose soil, plant the tree as is taking care if possible to help spread the roots out in the planting hole.



Cut an “X” across the bottom of the root ball and 4 vertical slices, if root-bound.

4. Set the tree/shrub in the middle of the hole. **Avoid planting the tree/shrub too deep. See picture below for correct planting depth. The goal is to position the root flare (at the base of the trunk) just above ground level.**



5. Using some soil, secure the tree in a straight position, then fill and firmly pack the hole with original soil using a shovel and your hands. Do not use your feet- this overly compacts the soil.

6. Mulch your tree/shrub for at least the first 3 years it is in the ground. Place the mulch at a 3 to 4 inch depth in a three foot diameter around the root zone. Pine bark or pine needle mulches are a good choice. Avoid wood mulch and dyed mulches. **Do not pile up the mulch around the base of the tree/shrub (like a mountain or “mulch volcano”). This practice, although commonly done by commercial landscape companies, is very harmful for the tree and can cause disease, root, and trunk problems. This unfortunate practice of “volcano mulching,” though common, is *NOT* good for the tree/shrub.**

