

# What's in a Name?

**Shining Sumac**, Flameleaf Sumac, Dwarf Sumac, Winged Sumac... these are all names for the same plant, *Rhus copallinum*.

Because common names can change from country to country—and even town to town—the 18th-century Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus developed a scientific system of grouping plants by similarities and naming them accordingly. The first name, which is always capitalized, refers to the larger group that the plant belongs to—its genus. The second refers to the plant's smaller, more

specific group—its species. The scientific names of plants are italicized.

Although scientific names are generally written in Latin, there are some exceptions. In the case of *Rhus copallinum*, “rhus” is the Greek word for sumac, while “copallinum” comes from the Aztec word copalli, meaning resinous.

While it's best to use scientific names when



*To find Shining Sumacs at the Arboretum, take a stroll in Nancy's Meadow. Need help with identification?*

**Watch our introduction to Shining Sumac video.**

identifying plants, common names can be quite descriptive. What attributes do the common names for *Rhus copallinum* describe?

## TELL IT LIKE IT IS

Take a look at the common names of several Arboretum plants below. In your nature journal, draw a picture of what you think each plant may look like based on its name. Then use a field guide (Try searching Adkins Arboretum's **Living Collections Database**) to find out what the plant actually looks like. How close were you? If you had a common name based on your personality or appearance, what would it be?

> HEARTS-A-BURSTING

> JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT

> SPRING BEAUTY

> TROUT LILY

> INDIAN PIPE

> BLOODROOT

> LADY SLIPPER

> RATTLESNAKE WEED



**Want to dig deeper?** Look up the scientific names for the plants above. How do they relate to the common names? Are they rooted in languages other than Latin?

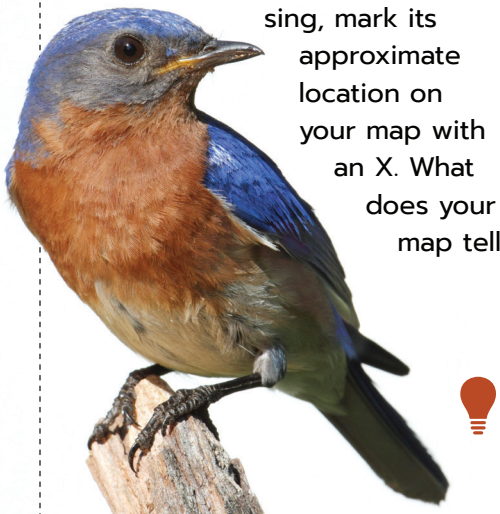
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# Not Just 'For the Birds'

The fuzzy red berries of the **Shining Sumac** ripen in late summer and are the favorite food of many birds. In fact, over 300 species of songbirds feed on them!



Some species that frequent sumacs include ruffed grouse, bobwhite quail, ring-necked pheasant, eastern phoebe, common crow, American robin (pictured top right), eastern bluebird (pictured bottom left), wild turkey, northern mockingbird, and gray catbird. Take a walk at the Arboretum. Once you've reached a sumac thicket, have a seat on the path and take out your nature journal. Quietly sketch a "sound map" of your location that includes the path and any vegetation around you. Every time you hear a bird



sing, mark its approximate location on your map with an X. What does your map tell



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you about where the birds like to hang out?

Because sumac berries remain on the plant through winter, they are an important emergency food source for a variety of wildlife, not just birds. Rabbits, squirrels, and white-tailed deer browse on Shining Sumac twigs, and spring flowers attract native bees and honeybees. Although you may not see many animals on your nature walks (psst: they're scared of you!), you can look for signs that animals are nearby. See the list to the right of common signs left by animals. On your next nature walk, take this list with you and mark any that you see.

## READING THE SIGNS

*Common evidence left by animals*

- BEDS (pushed-down areas of vegetation)
- PATHS (narrow trails through the underbrush)
- TRACKS (animal footprints)
- NESTS
- BURROWS
- HOLES
- GNAWINGS (chewed twigs)
- FEATHERS
- FUR
- RUBBINGS ("polished" areas, often where bark has been rubbed off of trees)
- DENS
- BONES
- SCAT (animal poop)



**Can't make it to the Arboretum and don't have sumac trees nearby? Look in your yard, local park, or out your window. What animal signs can you see?**

PHOTOS: AL MUELLER/ADOBE.STOCK.COM (TOP), STEVE BYLAND/ADOBE.STOCK.COM (BOTTOM),



# Green is Good!

The glossy green leaves of **Shining Sumac** get their color from chlorophyll. Chlorophyll is a green pigment that helps plants trap energy from the sun in a process known as photosynthesis.

Through photosynthesis, plants combine water and carbon dioxide to form glucose, which is a type of sugar. Because plants produce their own food, they are known as producers. Producers form the base of the food chain—they are eaten by herbivores, which are in turn eaten by carnivores.

During photosynthesis, plants absorb carbon dioxide

and release oxygen. Breathe in. You are breathing in oxygen! Breathe out. Now you are releasing carbon dioxide. When we burn fossil fuels like gas and oil, carbon dioxide enters our atmosphere. Too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere leads to warmer temperatures on earth. Want to keep your cool? Plant a tree! Shining Sumacs (and all trees)



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are an example of carbon sinks—natural reservoirs that absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

## CHLOROPHYLL RUBBINGS

1

Gather a spoon, some white sheets of paper, and a bunch of leaves. Avoid leaves with a waxy coating; they will not work well for this activity!

2

Fold one sheet of paper in half with a single layer of leaves inside. Use a piece of tape to hold the paper in place.

3

Rub your spoon firmly all over. Gently untape your paper and open to reveal your chlorophyll rubbing.



**For older kids and adults:** *Try placing leaves between two layers of white cotton and pounding with a hammer. The resulting image will be clearer than a paper rubbing.*

PHOTO: SCHOOLHOUSE FARMHOUSE STUDIO