



## William T. Kemper Center for Home Gardening

Visit us on the Web: [www.gardeninghelp.org](http://www.gardeninghelp.org)

### Best Plants for Problem Clay Soils: Shrubs

#### **Shrubs**

##### *Aesculus pavia* — Red buckeye

Hummingbirds are attracted to the long clusters of red to orange-red flowers of red buckeye. It has palmately compound leaves and seed capsules with 1 or 2 shiny brown buckeyes. Red buckeye grows in full sun to part shade, although it may become more open in shade. This shrub is suitable for the shrub border in groups, massed or as a specimen plant, keeping in mind that it may lose its leaves in early fall.

##### *Callicarpa americana* — Beautyberry

The delicate lavender to pink flowers of beautyberry mature into profuse bright violet to magenta fruits that encircle the nodes of the stems in thick rings. In the St. Louis area, this loose, open shrub will probably die back to the ground in winter and should be grown as an herbaceous perennial. Best when massed at the back of shrub borders, in native plant gardens, or naturalized, beautyberry requires minimal care once established.

##### *Clethra alnifolia* — Sweet pepperbush

Summersweet or sweet pepperbush has upright clusters of fragrant white flowers and lustrous dark green leaves that turn pale yellow to golden brown in fall. Its dried seedpods are an interesting addition to the winter garden. Cultivars with pinkish white to rosy flowers or variegated leaves are available.

##### *Cornus sericea* — Red osier dogwood

The intensely red stems of red osier dogwood are a striking garden feature in fall and winter. Its clusters of small white flowers mature into whitish fruits that attract birds. Best when grown in mass, this vigorous shrub will spread by underground stems.

##### *Corylus americana* — Hazelnut

American filbert or hazelnut is a multi-stemmed shrub that is best grown in informal areas where it can spread, as a hedge, or at the rear of a shrub border. The 3 to 4" long yellowish brown male catkins are showy in early spring. Its edible nuts are enclosed in interesting leafy ragged-edged bracts and are attractive to squirrels and birds.

##### *Hamamelis vernalis* — Ozark witch hazel

The fragrant and unusual flowers of Ozark witch hazel are a welcome addition to the garden in mid to late winter. These flowers are generally yellow to red with 4 narrow twisted petals and bloom for up to a month. Changing to a golden yellow in fall, this durable plant is good for shrub borders, screens or informal hedges, a specimen plant or a native plant or naturalized garden.

##### *Ilex verticillata* — Winterberry

Winterberries are known for their red berries that brighten the garden in fall and winter. Berries are only

borne on female plants, but generally just one male plant is needed for every nine to ten female plants. This shrub is a good choice for low wet areas and is especially attractive when grown massed or in groups.

*Rhus aromatica* — Fragrant sumac

Despite its relationship and resemblance to poison ivy, fragrant sumac is non-poisonous and is an easily grown shrub that can provide a cover for embankments, difficult areas with poor soil, native plant gardens or naturalized areas. Female flowers mature into clusters of hairy red fruits that are attractive to wildlife and may persist into winter. The glossy trifoliolate leaves are aromatic when bruised and turn orange, red, and purple in fall. 'Gro-low' is a popular cultivar that may reach 2' tall and 6-8' wide, making it a good choice for a low hedge or ground cover.

*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus* — Coralberry

Coralberry or Indian currant is valued for its showy coral red fruits that persist through most of the winter attracting birds and wildlife. The stems may also be used in indoor floral arrangements. The nectar of the tiny flowers provides food for bees and hummingbirds while the leaves are a food source for butterfly larvae. Spreading by root suckers and runners, coralberry is a good choice for a hedge, naturalizing, native plant gardens, or shrub borders.

*Viburnum dentatum* — Arrowwood viburnum

Arrowwood viburnum is a durable vigorous shrub used for hedges, screens, shrub borders and native plantings. Its white flat-topped flower clusters mature into blue to bluish-black fruits that attract birds and wildlife. The lustrous dark green leaves of this multi-stemmed shrub with its straight-as-an-arrow branches change to drab yellow to glossy red and reddish purple in fall.

**Sun:** F=Full sun, P=Part shade, S=Shade; **Water:** D=Dry, A=Average, W=Wet

Scientific name	Common name	Height (ft)	MO native	Zone	Bloom color	Bloom time	Sun	Water	Notes
<i>Aesculus pavia</i>	Red buckeye	12-15	Yes	4-8	Red	Mid to late spring	F-P	A	Flowers attract hummingbirds; easily grown from seed; good for shrub border
<i>Aronia arbutifolia</i>	Red chokeberry	6-10	No	5-9	White	Late spring	F-P	A	Good fall color; most effective when grown in a group; tolerates boggy soil
<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>	Japanese barberry	3-6	No	4-10	Yellow with red tinge	Mid spring	F-P	D-A	Many cultivars are available for a wide variety of foliage; tolerates dry conditions
<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	Butterfly bush	4-10	No	5-9	Lilac	Early summer to frost	F	A	Grows taller in warmer climates; usually grows as herbaceous perennial in Zones 5 and 6
<i>Callicarpa</i>	Beautyberry	3-6	Yes	6-10	Lavender,	Summer	F-P	A	Grow as herbaceous

<i>americana</i>					pink				perennial; blooms on new growth; fruits more profusely in full sun
<i>Calycanthus floridus</i>	Carolina allspice	6-10	No	4-9	Brown	Mid to late spring	F-P	A	Fragrant flowers (scent varies); good specimen tree or in shrub border
<i>Chaenomeles speciosa</i>	Flowering quince	6-10	No	5-8	Crimson	Spring	F-P	A	Tolerates wind and drought; valued for profuse flowers
<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>	Summersweet	3-8	No	3-9	White	Mid to late summer	F-P	A	Fragrant flowers; good for wet areas
<i>Cornus sericea</i>	Red osier dogwood	7-9	No	3-8	White	Late spring to early summer	F-P	A	Red stems provide winter interest; fast grower; good for wet areas
<i>Corylus americana</i>	Hazelnut	10-16	Yes	4-9	Male-brown, female-red	Spring	F-P	A	Will spread to form thickets; produces edible nuts
<i>Cotinus coggygria</i>	Smoke tree	10-15	No	5-8	Yellow	Mid to late spring	F	A	Not for poorly drained clay; valued for long-lasting display of smoke-like hairs on spent flowers
<i>Deutzia gracilis</i>	Slender deutzia	2-5	No	5-8	White	Spring	F-P	A	Flowers best in full sun; prune in spring after flowering
<i>Euonymus alatus</i>	Winged euonymus	15-20	No	4-8	Yellow-green	Late spring	F-P	A	Good fall color; tolerates full shade; not for wet soil
<i>Forsythia x intermedia</i>	Early forsythia	8-10	No	6-9	Yellow	Early to mid spring	F-P	A	Flower buds may be killed in Zone 5; flowers more in full sun
<i>Hamamelis vernalis</i>	Ozark witch hazel	6-10	Yes	4-8	Yellow with red inner calyx	to early spring	F-P	A	Fragrant flowers; leaves turn golden yellow in fall
<i>Hibiscus syriacus</i>	Rose of Sharon	8-12	No	5-8	Dark pink, white, red, purple	Mid summer to early fall	F-P	A	Not for extremely dry or extremely wet soil; does well in hot weather
<i>Hydrangea arborescens</i>	Smooth hydrangea	3-5	Yes	3-9	White	Summer	P	A	Grow as herbaceous perennial to offset weedy appearance, especially in cold winter climates; does not tolerate drought
<i>Hydrangea paniculata</i>	Hydrangea	10-25	No	3-8	White, aging to pink	Late summer	F-P	A	One of the most cold hardy hydrangeas; best when pruned to 6-10'
<i>Hypericum</i>	Shrubby	1-5	Yes	3-8	Yellow	Early to	F-P	A	Tolerates some

<i>prolificum</i>	St. John's wort					mid summer			drought; for shrub border, native plant garden or hedge
<i>Ilex decidua</i>	Possum ham	7-15	Yes	5-9	Dull white	Mid to late spring	F-P	A	Need male and female plants for fruit; attracts small mammals and birds
<i>Ilex verticillata</i>	Winterberry	6-10	Yes	3-9	White	Mid spring	F-P	A-W	Need male and female plants for fruit; good for wet places
<i>Itea virginica</i>	Virginia sweetspire	3-5	Yes	5-9	White	Early summer	F-P	A-W	Good for wet areas; fragrant flowers; leaves attractive red in fall
<i>Kerria japonica</i>	Japanese kerria	3-6	No	4-9	Bright yellow	Mid spring	P	A	Tolerates full shade; blooms on previous year's wood; may rebloom in summer
<i>Kolkwitzia amabilis</i>	Beauty bush	6-10	No	4-8	Pink with yellow throat	Late spring to early summer	F	A	Best flowering in full sun; renew by pruning out old wood or cutting to ground
<i>Lindera benzoin</i>	Spice bush	6-12	Yes	4-9	Greenish yellow	Early spring	F-P	A	Good for moist areas; fragrant leaves; tolerates full shade
<i>Lonicera fragrantissima</i>	Winter honeysuckle	6-10	No	4-8	Creamy white	Early spring	F-P	D-A	Very fragrant flowers; for hedge, screen or background plant
<i>Magnolia</i> Little Girl series	Magnolia	10-15	No	4-7	Purple to red purple, some fading to white or pink inside	Early spring	F-P	A	Includes cultivars such as 'Ann,' 'Betty' and 'Jane'; bred to avoid frost damage by blooming later
<i>Malus sargentii</i>	Sargent crabapple	6-8	No	4-7	Pale pink buds, white flowers	Spring	F	A	Fruits attract birds; generally blooms profusely in alternate years
<i>Philadelphus coronarius</i>	Sweet mock orange	10-12	No	4-8	Creamy white	Late spring to early summer	F-P	A	Thrives in dry conditions; fragrant
<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i>	Ninebark	5-8	Yes	2-8	White, pink	Late spring	F-P	D-A	Bark exfoliates to provide winter interest; cut to ground in winter to rejuvenate
<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>	Shrubby cinquefoil	1-4	No	2-7	Yellow	Early summer to frost	F-P	A	Tolerates poor dry soil; flowers best in full sun
<i>Pyracantha</i>	Scarlet	6-18	No	6-9	Whitish	Late	F-P	A	Does well in dry soil

<i>coccinea</i>	firethorn					spring to early summer				during summer; prune to control growth
<i>Rhodotypos scandens</i>	Black jetbead	3-6	No	4-8	White	Late spring to early summer	F-P	A		Tough plant for difficult areas; jet black berries persist throughout winter
<i>Rhus aromatica</i>	Fragrant sumac	2-6	Yes	3-9	Yellow	Early spring	F-P	D-A		Full sun gives better fall color; not for poorly drained soil
<i>Ribes odoratum</i>	Clove currant	6-12	Yes	4-8	Yellow	Spring	F-P	A		Spreads by suckers to form colonies; fragrant flowers
<i>Rosa rugosa</i>	Rugosa rose	3-8	No	2-9	Purplish rose to violet carmine	Summer	F	A		Large bright red hips attract birds; fragrant flowers
<i>Salix purpurea</i>	Purpleosier willow	8-10	No	3-6	Grayish white	Early spring	F	A-W		Has purple stems that turn light to olive gray; good for wet areas
<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	Common elderberry	5-12	Yes	3-9	White	Summer	F-P	A-W		Fruit attracts birds and is used for wines and jellies; may look unkempt in small gardens
<i>Spiraea japonica</i>	Japanese spirea	4-6	No	3-8	Pink	Late spring to mid summer	F	A		Cultivars more readily available than species; attracts butterflies
<i>Spiraea nipponica</i> 'Snowmound'	Spirea	2-4	No	3-8	White	Late spring	F-P	A		Flowers profusely; attracts butterflies; for hedges, foundation plant or borders
<i>Staphylea trifolia</i>	American bladdernut	10-15	Yes	3-8	White	Spring	P-S	D-A		Prefers moist soil; seed capsules are interesting addition to dried arrangements
<i>Symphoricarpos orbiculatus</i>	Coralberry	2-5	Yes	2-7	Pinkish white	Summer	F-P	A		Spreads by suckers and runners; showy fruits provide winter interest or may be used in floral arrangements
<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>	Common lilac	8-15	No	3-7	Lilac	Spring	F	A		Needs good air circulation to reduce disease: best flowering in full sun but tolerates part shade
<i>Viburnum dentatum</i>	Arrowwood Viburnum	6-10	Yes	2-8	White	Late spring	F-P	A		Vigorous reliable plant; fruit attracts birds and wildlife

<i>Viburnum prunifolium</i>	Black haw	12-15	Yes	3-9	White	Spring	F-P	D-A	May also be grown as small tree; fruits attracts birds and wildlife; tolerates drought
<i>Weigela florida</i>	Old-fashioned weigela	6-9	No	4-8	Rosy pink	Spring	F	A	May rebloom during summer