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When hiking through our Minnesota woods and the adjacent countryside you will have a chance to observe many kinds of plants. Some are large trees, others are small plants growing no higher than a few inches off the ground, while others are medium-sized and are called shrubs or bushes. We will try to identify a few of Minnesota's common shrubs in this pamphlet.

Shrubs have individual characteristics that make them different from the surrounding plants; like trees each shrub species is unique. Let's take a look at some specific characteristics of shrubs that will help in identifying them.

A shrub species size and form frequently distinguishes it from many of its neighboring plants. Some are tall and slender while others are short and grow in clumps. Minnesota shrubs range in height from one foot to twenty feet.

Looking at the bark helps to separate species. The color and texture of branches and stems are different from one shrub to another. Some may be brown and rough while others may have grey and smooth bark.

Leaves are probably the most common way of telling one shrub from another. The way the leaves occur on the branch is one characteristic. Are they alternate (one leaf at each node) or are they opposite (two leaves directly across from each other at each node)? The shape of the leaf is an aid to identifying plants. Is it simple (one leaf) or is it compound (two or more similar leaflets united)? Does the leaf have a serrate edge (saw like)? Is the surface smooth or is it pubescent (hairy)? Is the leaf dark green, pale green, or shiny? One or more of these features help to identify one plant from another. Explanations and pictures of these characteristics are contained in Extension Bulletin 363, Minnesota Forest Trees.

A shrub's flower and fruit is important in identification. Do the flowers and fruit grow by themselves or are they in groups? What color are the flowers and fruit? Is the fruit a nut, berry or a drupe (fleshy fruit with a pit or stone)? Are they edible? When do they ripen?

Each bush has a favorite place where it grows. Some thrive along a swamp or lake, while others prefer a hillside or deep woods. In the following pages are drawings of a few of our common native Minnesota shrubs and descriptions on how to identify them.

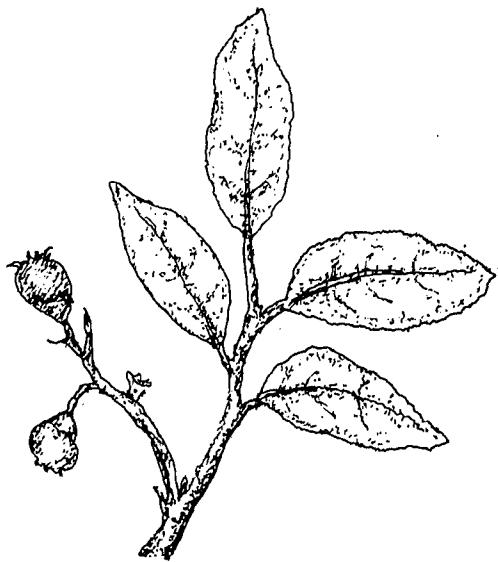
Blackberry and Raspberry (Rubus sp.)

This low arching vine-like shrub grows from 1 to 7 feet high; stems are red or purplish-brown; young twigs are green and are armed with spines and hooked thorns; leaves are alternate, grouped in threes, smooth dark green above and hairy white beneath, edges are sharp serrate (saw like); white flowers appear in the spring; fruit is a red or black berry very edible for man and other animals.

These bushes grow in thickets, clearings, borders of woods, and along roadsides throughout the state.



Blackberry



Blueberry

Blueberry (Vaccinium angustifolium)

This plant is a low bush growing from 1/2 foot to 2 feet high; twigs are dark green and warty with smooth shiny bark; leaves are alternate (single leaf at each node), margin (edge) is finely serrate (bristle-like teeth), upper and lower surface is smooth except for fine hairs along the midrib (central vein); flowers are in groups and white or pale pink in color, blossoms in May and early June; fruit is a blue berry (see picture), sweet and very edible.

Blueberry grows in sandy dry soil in open woods and clearings. Sometimes found on rocks and barrens. It is found in the coniferous (evergreen) forests in acid soils, mostly in the northern portions of the state.

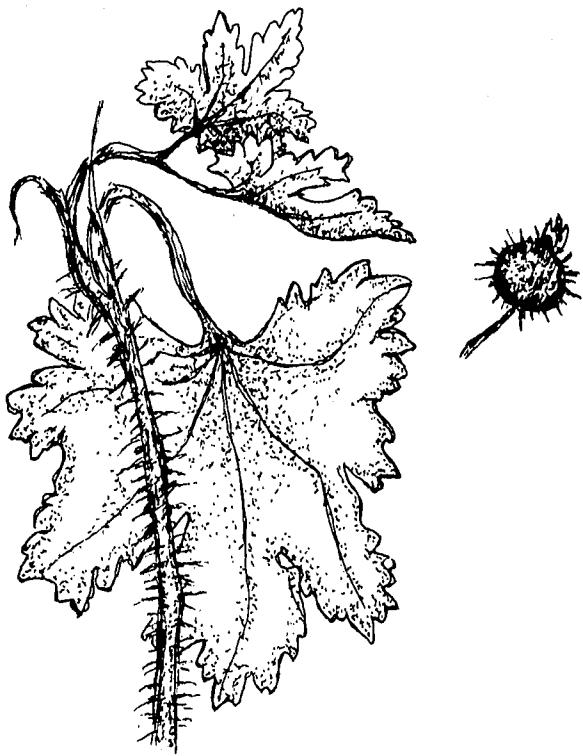
Buckthorn, Dwarf Alder (Rhamnus alnifolia)

Dwarf alder is a small shrub that grows from 1 to 3 feet tall; bark is dark gray on old branches; growing twigs are puberulent (finely hairy); leaves are alternate (single leaf at each node) and finely serrate (fine saw-teeth on edges), glabrous (smooth) green on top and puberulent (hairy) underneath; small green flowers blossom in May; fruit is a small black drupe (fleshy fruit with a stone, such as a plum) and grows in groups of three (see picture).

This bush grows mostly in swamps, lowland woods, and meadows; common throughout the northern part of the state.



Buckthorn



Prickly Gooseberry

Currants and Gooseberries (Ribes sp.)

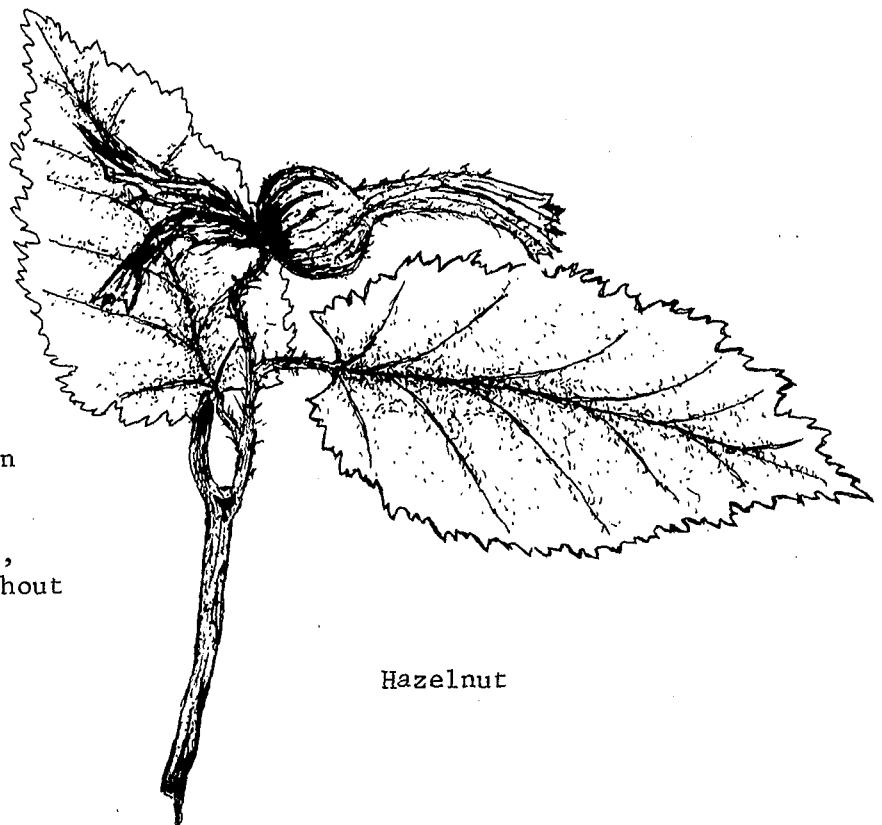
These low shrubs grow from 2 to 5 feet high; stems are brown; young twigs are greenish-gray and can be armed (spine or thorns) or unarmed; leaves are alternate (single leaf at each node), thin and pubescent (hairs or velvety); flowers that can be white, yellow, green or purple; fruit is a round black or purple berry with tiny spines, size is a little larger than a bean (see picture). The berries are tart but edible.

Currants and gooseberries grow both in swamps and on upland hills. They are very common in the woods and swamps in Minnesota.

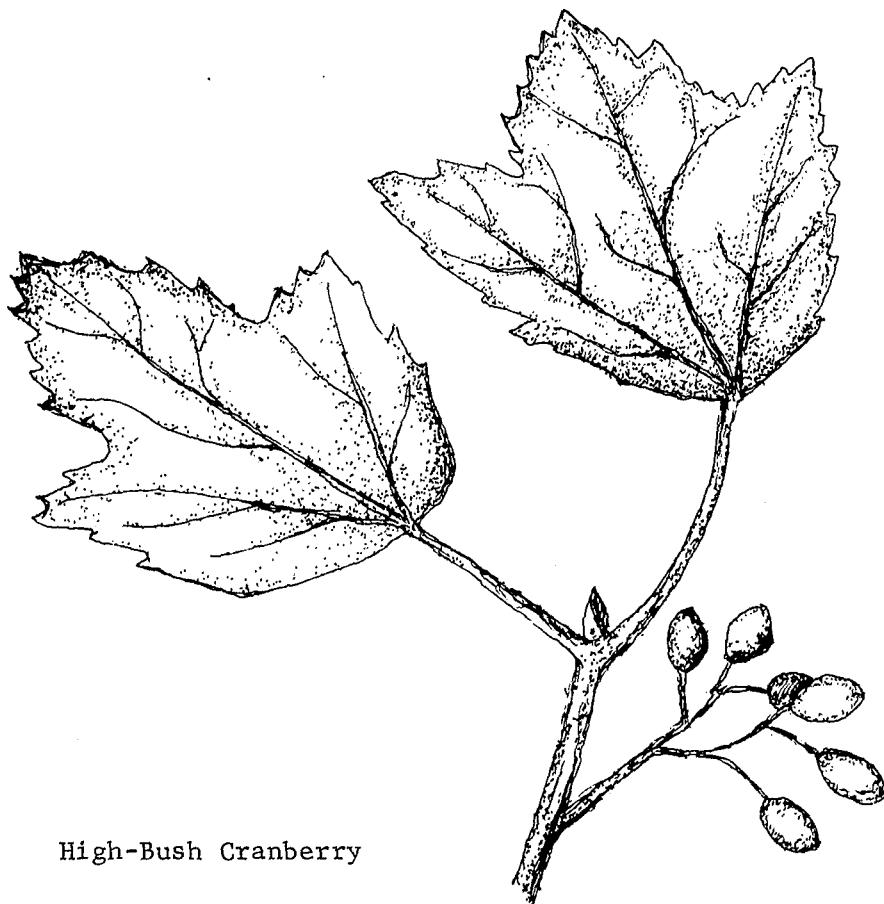
Hazelnut (*Corylus sp.*)

This shrub grows from 3 to 15 feet high; bark is gray and smooth; young twigs are pubescent (hairy); leaves are alternate (single leaf at each node) and serrate (teeth on the edge like a saw); fruiting body is a catkin (a spike-like, drooping, scaly flower); fruit is a round nut enclosed in a husk, about the size of an acorn. It is edible and eaten by animals, including man.

This shrub grows in woods, thickets, and hillsides. It is common throughout the state.



Hazelnut



High-Bush Cranberry

High-Bush Cranberry
(*Viburnum trilobum*)

This plant is a shrub from 3 to 10 feet high; branches are erect (straight up and down), smooth and grayish-brown in color; leaves opposite (directly across from each other at the same node (see picture)), lobed, coarsely serrate (saw teeth), upper surface dark yellow-green, smooth, lower surface paler with stiff hairs along the larger veins; flowers white, in groups, blooming in May and June; fruit bright red, edible when cooked, sour and bitter otherwise, ripe in September.

This bush grows in cool woods, thickets and on shores and rocky slopes. It is more common in our coniferous forests in Minnesota.

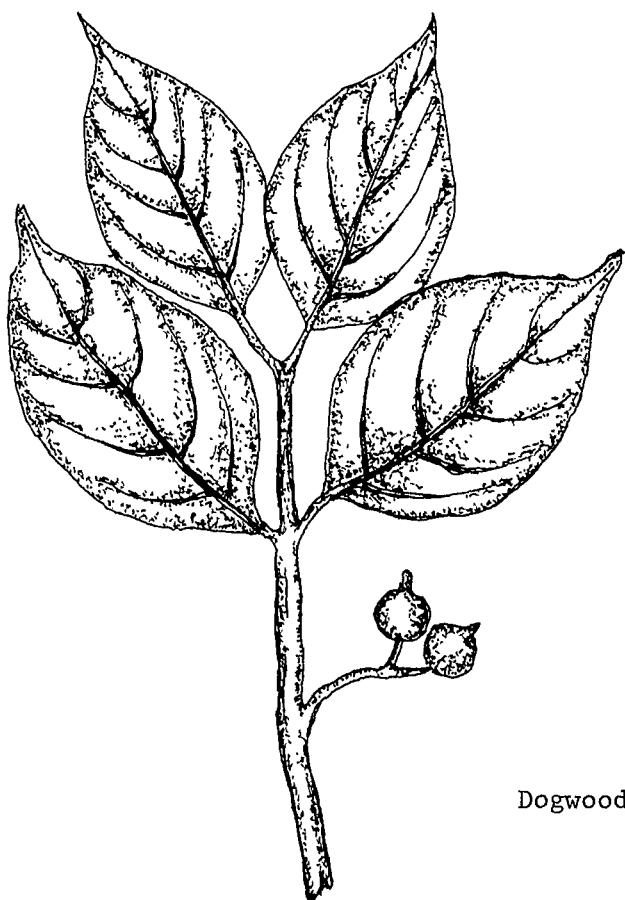
Juneberry (Amelanchier sp.)

This small tree or shrub grows from 6 to 20 feet tall; leaves are smooth purple-bronze or reddish in the spring, turning dark green on top and whitish beneath; sharply serrate (saw like) on the edges; white flowers in the spring; a dark purple or blackish berry like fruit in June (see picture); berry is the size of a pea and is sweet and juicy, edible to man and animal.

This shrub is common on the edges of woods, on moist hillsides and in valleys. It is found usually in our hardwood forests in Minnesota.



Juneberry



Dogwood

Panicled Dogwood (Cornus racemosa)

This plant is a shrub that grows from 3 to 6 feet high; stems are ash-gray; young twigs are brownish and smooth; leaves are opposite (directly across from each other at the same node), green and pubescent (hairy in places); flowers are white and produce a white fruit (see picture).

This dogwood grows mostly in dry woods and open habitats throughout the state except north of Lake Superior.

Prickly Ash (*Xanthoxylum americanum*)

This prickly shrub grows 6 to 12 feet high often forming dense thickets; twigs are armed with spines in pairs; leaves are pinnately compound (leaflets on both sides of a common stalk) and alternate; older leaves are smooth on top and hirsute (rough or coarse) on the bottom, leaves have shallow teeth on the edges; flowers are small, in groups and appear before the leaves, greenish in color; fruit is reddish brown when ripe with black shining seeds. Fruit not edible.

Prickly ash is found along border edges of woodlands in Minnesota, except in the northeast.



Prickly Ash



Red-Berried Elder

Red-Berried Elder (*Sambucus pubens*)

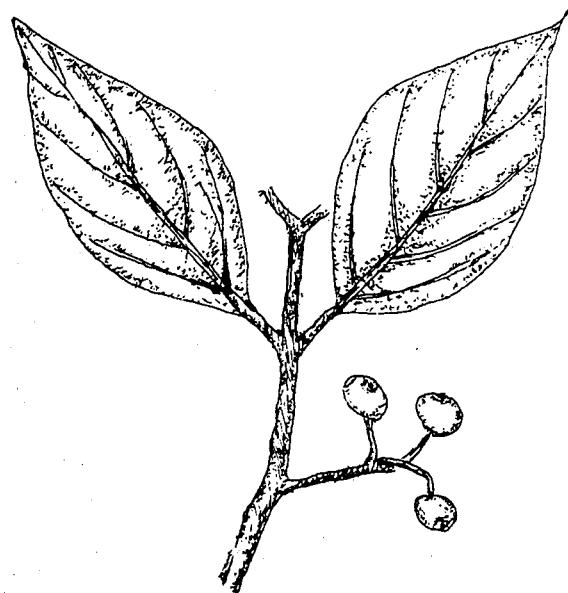
This plant is a woody shrub about 3 to 12 feet tall; bark is gray and warty; young stems are hairy with large brown pith (spongy material in center of stem); leaves are compound (two or more leaflets united) and opposite (directly across from each other at same node), margin (edge) is sharply serrate (teeth like a saw), upper surface dark green almost glabrous (smooth), lower surface pubescent (hairy) and pale, 5 to 7 leaflets per leaf; flowers are in groups and yellowish white, blossoming in April and May; fruit bright red berry (see picture), ripe in June and July.

This shrub grows on rocky banks and in ravines, woods and clearings throughout the state, but is more common northward.

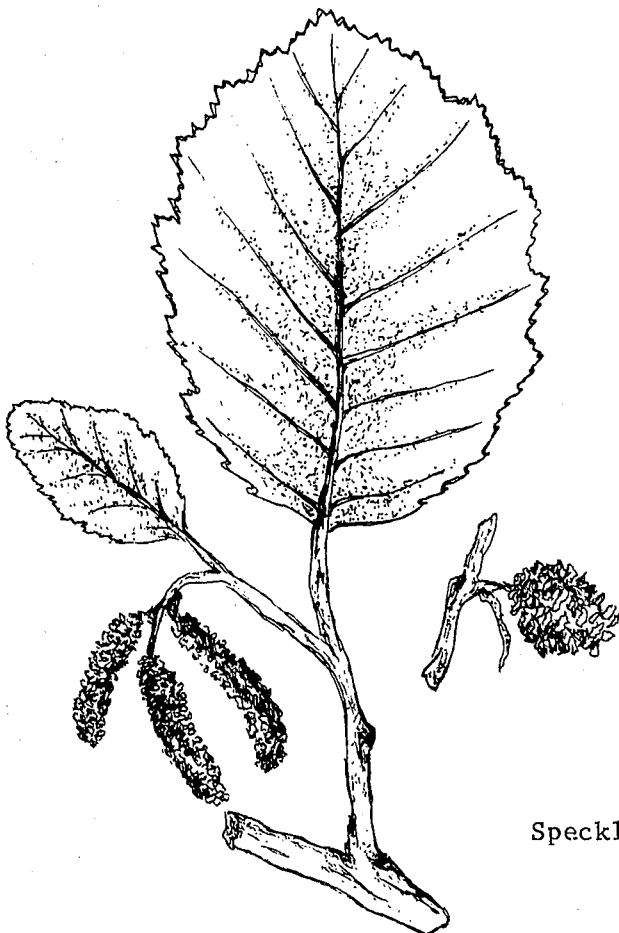
Red-Osier Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*)

This plant is a shrub growing 3 to 9 feet high. It grows in clumps; bark of the stems and branches are purplish-red; young twigs green turning red in summer; leaves are opposite (directly across from each other at the same node) upper surface is bright green, lower surface bluish white, both are finely pubescent (with fine hairs); flowers are small and white, blossoming in May and continues intermittently through the season; fruit is white or lead colored (see picture).

Red-osier dogwood grows in low, moist thickets, in swamps and on lake shores throughout the state except north of Lake Superior. The Indians prepared the bark of the dogwood for "kinnickinnik" which they used for smoking.



Red-Osier Dogwood



Speckled Alder (*Alnus rugosa* var. *americana*)

This shrub or small tree grows from 6 to 25 feet high; bark is dark brown; young twigs are reddish-brown and smooth; leaves are alternate (single leaf at each node) and edges are coarsely serrate (teeth like a saw), dark green and smooth on top and paler wax covering with pubescence (hair) beneath the leaves; flower is a catkin (see picture); fruit looks like a small pine cone (see picture).

Speckled alder grows in moist places, usually along shores of lakes or banks of streams, throughout Minnesota.

Speckled Alder

Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*)

This shrub is 6-12 feet tall; the bark is smooth and grey; young twigs covered with velvety-hair; leaves are pinnately compound (leaves on both sides of a common stalk), with 11 to 31 small leaflets for each stalk, leaf edges are serrate (teeth like a saw) and dark shiny green on top with light green hair on bottom, in fall leaves are bright red; flowers are clustered and yellowish green in the spring; fruit is clustered and bright red turning purple in winter (see picture).

This species grows in dry, rocky, or gravelly soil, often in openings or along edges of a hardwood forest, throughout the state, but is more common in the southern portion.



Staghorn Sumac



Woodbine

Woodbine (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

Woodbine is a high-climbing woody vine; vine is brown; leaves are compound with five leaflets like the fingers of a hand (see picture); leaves are coarsely serrate (saw teeth), dull green above, paler green beneath, smooth throughout; flowers are small and greenish blossoming in June; fruit is a small blue-black berry and is ripe in September.

This vine is found in woods, thickets and on rocky banks throughout the state, especially in the southern portions. It is extensively planted as a climber on porches, trellises, and walls.