

LEMONADE BERRY

Rhus integrifolia

An In-Depth Guide



Credit: Bob Perry

Daniel Scheir | Cal Poly Pomona | Landscape Architecture

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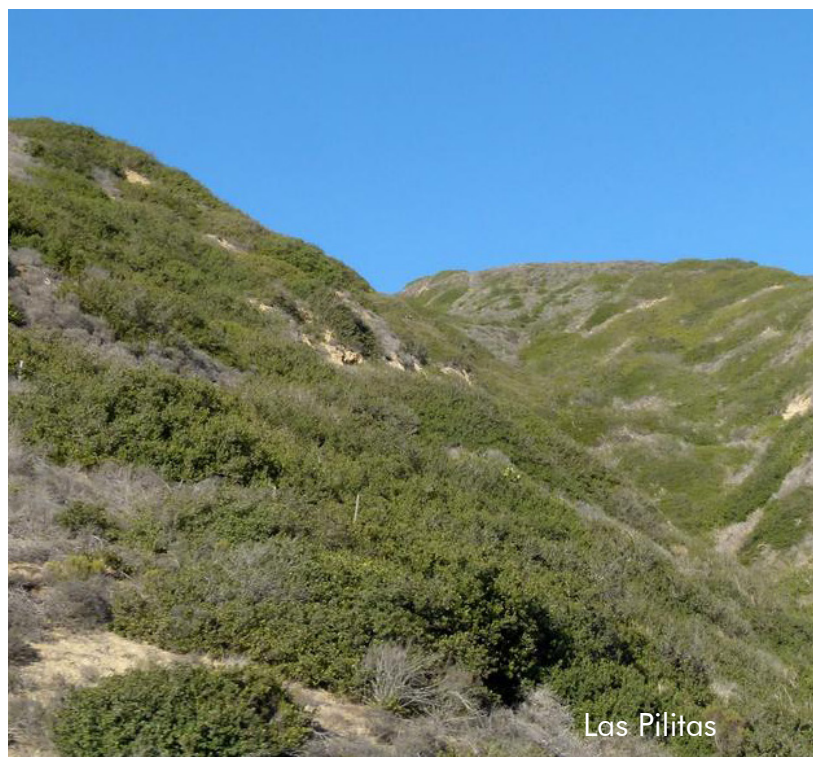
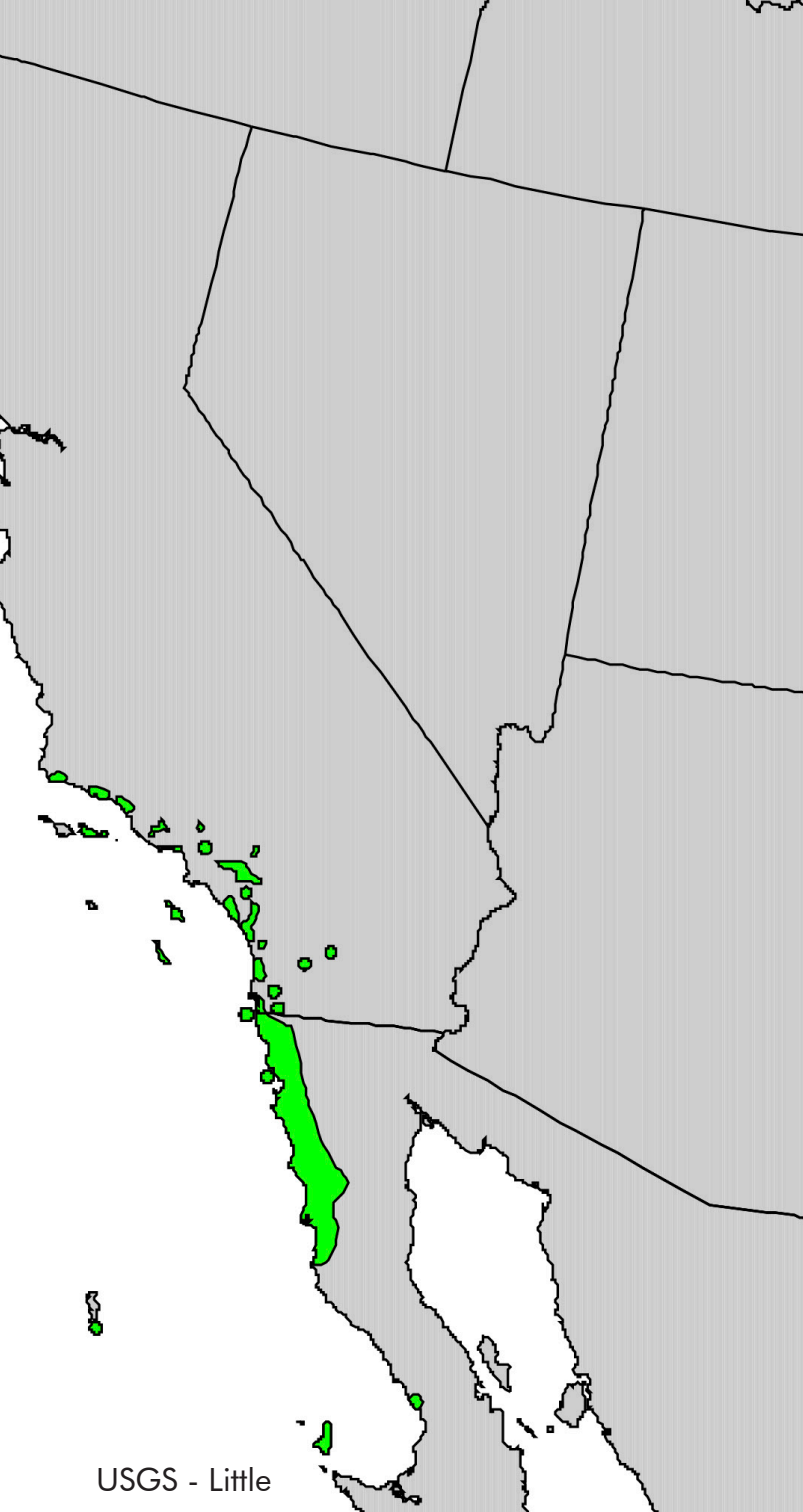


Credit: Bob Perry

Rhus integrifolia is a California Native that has a number of common names including: Lemonade Berry, Lemonade Sumac, and Coast Sumac. It is an evergreen shrub that grows from six to ten feet in height and spreads between ten and 15 feet wide.

The lemonade berry has a rapid growth rate ranging from one to three feet per year. It grows in a mounded form and gives a medium textured visual appearance.

GENERAL INFORMATION



Rhus integrifolia can be found in plant communities such as Chapparal, Coastal Sage Scrub, and Coastal Strand. This species is distributed all the way from Santa Barbara down to Baja California, and inland to Western Riverside.

The plant naturally grows below elevations of 2,600 - 3000 feet and generally can be found on dry mostly open-facing slopes.

WHERE CAN I FIND IT?



The leaf of the lemonade berry is simple, and they are found in an alternating pattern. They range in size with the average being around 4x3 cm. The shape of the leaves are oval or elliptic and are dark green in color.

The texture of the leaves is leathery to the touch and somewhat waxy in appearance. Leaves can vary from flat to slightly rolled in shape and often have small sharp teeth around their margins.

HOW CAN I IDENTIFY IT? – LEAF



sbwildflowers.wordpress.com

Las Pilitas

Lemonade berry produces showy and fragrant flowers that range in color from pink to white. This species flowers towards the end of winter and through spring (February - May). *Rhus integrifolia* is a dioecious plant, meaning that male and female flowers are not found on the same specimen.

The small flowers often group together in tight clusters at the ends of branches to create beautiful formations like the ones seen above. The texture of these flowers is sticky and the smell is fragrant.

HOW CAN I IDENTIFY IT? – FLOWER



Morse, 2013



Akulova, 2018

The fruit of the lemonade berry is showy and its color ranges from red to dark red when mature. The fruiting season follows the flowering season and occurs in spring and summer.

The fruit is sticky and flat in shape containing a small hard stone of a seed. Tiny hairs cover the fruit, which grows to be about seven millimeters long and one centimeter in diameter.

HOW CAN I IDENTIFY IT? – FRUIT



Matson, 2006



Akulova, 2018



Morse, 2013

Rhus integrifolia is a very versatile plant that can have multiple applications in a designed landscape. Due to their edible berries, this plant is perfect for edible gardens and along with that, the plant offers other resources that make it great for wildlife gardens.

Lemonade Berry is resistant to fire, making it a good candidate for landscapes in fire prone areas. The plant is also used for bank stabilization and erosion control. Lemonade Berry can also be formed to create a hedge or espalier.

WHAT CAN I USE IT FOR? – LANDSCAPE



Docentjoyce, 2015

The berries of *Rhus integrifolia* have been consumed by Native American tribes throughout history. The Chumash, for example, would mash up the berries and leave the mixture to dry in the sun. The berry mash would be eaten raw once it was dried. Other Indigenous tribes would use dried berries by soaking them in water and heating it to create a form of hot “pink lemonade”.

The berries can also be eaten straight off the plant! For the tastiest result, chew on the berry to suck out its juice and spit out the remaining seed and pulp.

WHAT CAN I USE IT FOR? – ETHNOBOTANICAL



Morse, 2013

Along with the berries, indigenous peoples also made use of the leaves. The Cahuillas made a tea from the leaves to use as a treatment for coughs and colds. It has also been said that dried leaves were smoked.

Rhus integrifolia is a versatile plant that not only has many human applications, but also many resources for wildlife.

WHAT CAN I USE IT FOR? – ETHNOBOTANICAL



Mountain Quail
Schmierer, 2006



Scrub Jay
Rick Leinen



Cactus Wren
Brian E. Small



Red-Shafted Flicker
Taylor, 2009

The fruit of the lemonade berry is a valuable resource to wildlife as well as humans. Birds such as Mountain Quail, Crow, Red-shafted Flicker, Scrub Jay, and Cactus Wren all eat the lemonade berries. The twigs and leaves of the plant are eaten by Mountain Sheep as well.

Along with sustenance, *Rhus integrifolia* provides valuable habitat and shelter for a number of birds and small mammals due to its thick and sprawling form.

ARE THERE OTHER BENEFITS? – WILDLIFE



CSUCI, 2015

Lemonade Berry is extremely resilient when it comes to water requirements. In the South coastal regions water requirements are very low, and the in the inland valley regions water requirements are low. Along with this, once *Rhus integrifolia* is established, it can survive with little to no water. The plant is extremely drought tolerant leaving it green and lush during summer months without water.

Rhus integrifolia can grow in many different soil types with varying acidity, which means it will adapt well in most landscapes. Lastly, Lemonade Berry is fire retardant making it a great landscape plant in fire prone areas.

ARE THERE OTHER BENEFITS? – RESILIENCE

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- Timbrook, J. (2007). Chumash ethnobotany: Plant knowledge among the Chumash people of southern California. Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

Pictures

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- <http://www.worldbotanical.com/rhus.htm>
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- <http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-yP0bUwGboR4/URh9IkTsfEI/AAAAAAAAAEQ/TrOiVFV56g8/s1600/CactusWren.jpg>
- <https://celebrateurbanbirds.org/learn/birds/focal-species/california-scrub-jay/>
- <https://nativeplants.csuci.edu/rhus-integrifolia.htm>

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Plant ID Form

Plant #:	Family name: <i>Anacardiaceae</i>		
Botanical name: (genus & species) <i>Rhus integrifolia</i>			
Common name: <i>Lemonade Berry</i>			
Botanical name definition:			
Synonym(s), if any:			
Character: Evergreen , Semi-evergreen/semi-deciduous, Winter-deciduous, Drought-deciduous			
Type: <u>Woody</u> : Tree, Shrub , Subshrub, Vine <u>Herbaceous</u> : Perennial, Biennial, Annual Tree habit: Single-trunk , Multiple-trunk			
Height: 6'-10'		Spread: 10'-15'	
Growth rate: Slow, Moderate, Rapid			
Form: arching vase, broad dome, climbing, columnar, conical, cushion, dome, irregular, mat, mound , weeping,		Texture: fine, medium , coarse	
Plant communities: *Alkali Sink *Alpine Fell-Fields *Aquatic *Bristle-cone Pine Forest * Chaparral *Closed Cone Pine Forest *Coastal Prairie Coastal Sage Scrub oastal Salt Marsh * Coastal Strand *Creosote Bush Scrub *Douglas-Fir Forest *Foothill Woodland *Fresh Water Marsh * Joshua Tree Woodland *Lodgepole Pine Forest *Mixed Evergreen Forest . Coastal Coniferous Forest *N. Coastal Scrub *N. Juniper Woodland *N. Oak Woodland *Pinyon-Juniper Woodland *Red-Fir Forest *Redwood Forest *Riparian Woodland *Sagebrush Scrub *Saltwater Marsh *Shadscale Scrub *S. Oak Woodland *Subalpine Forest *Torrey Pine Forest *Valley Grassland *Vernal Pools *Yellow Pine Forest Other: *Invasive			
Occurrence/ Distribution: Found from Santa Barbara to Baja California and inland to western Riverside.			
Elevation: Found below elevations of 900 meters.			
Leaves: Simple ; Compound (pinnately, bipinnately, palmately; even, odd) Size: 2.5-6 cm x 2-4 cm Shape: cordate, deltoid, elliptic , lanceolate, linear, needlelike, oblanceolate, oblong, oval , ovate, palmately lobed, scalelike Margin: crenate, dentate, entire , lobed (pinnately, palmately), serrate, wavy Color: Top surface: Dark Green Underneath surface: Dark Green Arrangement: alternate , opposite, whorled, fascicled Surface: glabrous , glaucous, pubescence, viscid Other: Aromatic, etc.:			
Flowers: Showy ; Non-distinct; Fragrant ; Color: blue, green, lavender, orange, pink , red, yellow, white , other: Type: Monoecious, Dioecious , Polygamous; Perfect (bisexual), Imperfect (unisexual) Symmetry: Regular, Irregular Season: Winter , Spring , Summer, Fall Size: Other:			
Fruit: Showy ; Non-distinct Season: Winter, Spring , Summer , Fall Size: ^{1cm diameter} 7mm long Color: Red/Dark Red			
Plant edible?: No; Yes: Fruit /nut, Flowers, Leaves, Roots		Bark: Red to Gray , Scaly to Smooth	
Landscape Use: Accent/Specimen (flowers, foliage, bark, form) Avenue tree Background Barrier Borders/walkways Fence Containers/tubs Cut flowers Edible gardens Erosion control Espalier Fall color Fire resistant Foundation Fragrance Raised Ground cover Groves/masses Hedge (formal, informal) In lawns Parks Patio Planters Screening Shade tree Slopes/banks Street tree Topiary Understory (oaks, etc.) Wildlife gardens Windbreak Other:			
Ecology: <u>S. Coastal regions:</u> full sun , partial shade , full shade <u>Inland valley regions:</u> full sun , partial shade , full shade			
Tolerant of: drought , heat, smog, wind, summer watering		Hardiness: 9 - 11 °F. 20 - 50	
Soil: many , well-drained, acid, alkaline, clay, loam, sand, rich/organic, rocky, moist/wet pH: 5.00 - 8.00			
Ethnobotanical use: Baskets, Clothing, Dye, Food/Drink , Lumber, Medicine , Tools, Shelter, Other: <u>Used by:</u> Native Americans , Early settlers, In common use today <u>Part used:</u> Bark, Berry/Fruit/Nut , Flowers, Leaves , Resin, Roots, Stems, Other:			
Wildlife: Food: Berries , Foliage, Nectar, Pollen; Shelter/Cover By: Bees, Birds , Butterflies, Cattle, Deer, Hummingbirds, Larvae, Small mammals , other:			
1. Water requirements.: <u>S. Coastal regions:</u> VL L M H <u>Inland valley regions:</u> VL L M H			

Comments: Crown-sprouts after fires, Deer-proof, Highly flammable, Invasive, Messy, Needs pruning/thinning, **Needs little watering after established**, Short-lived, Toxic, Trained into tree, Other: