



Ghent University Botanical Garden

Rhus L.

VEGETATIVE KEY TO SPECIES IN CULTIVATION

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Vegetative identification key.

Introduction:

The taxa discussed here are belonging to the genus *Rhus* (sensu stricto), several other 'Rhus taxa' in cultivation are belonging to other genera fide [POWO](#) (see synonymy→ p3).

This key is based on vegetative characteristics, and therefore also of use when flowers and fruits are absent.

- Use a 10x hand lens to check pubescence and venation pattern in general.
- Look at the entire plant. Young specimens, shade, and strong shoots give an atypical view, so avoid them!
- Beware of hybridisation, especially with plants raised from seed other than wild origin.

Abbreviations and glossary for this key:

LS → lower surface

Taxa treated in this key: → p3.

Taxa referred to other genera and synonymy in this key: → p3.

References:

- JDL herbarium and [illustrations](#)
- living specimens, in various arboreta, botanic gardens and collections
- literature:

Flora of China - (2008) - *Rhus* in Flora of China VOL.11, p. 345-348. [online edition](#)

Grimshaw, J. & Christian, T. & all - *Rhus* in [Trees and Shrubs Online](#)

Krüssmann, G. - (1976-1978) - *Rhus* in Handbuch der Laubgehölze, VOL.3, p. 207-210.

Lancaster, R. - (2019) - *Rhus* in The Hillier Manual of Trees & Shrubs 9th Edition, p. 398-399.

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[Plantentuin Universiteit Gent](#)

[Arboretum Wespelaar](#)

01 a	Foliage with simple leaves.	02
b	Foliage with all leaves compound (trifoliolate or pinnate).	03
02 a	Lamina margin predominantly entire, LS fully reticulate (10× LENS).	<i>Rhus ovata</i>
b	Lamina margin predominantly irregularly denticulate to dentate, LS reticulate in part.	<i>Rhus integrifolia</i>
03 a	Leaves trifoliolate.	04
b	Leaves pinnate.	05
04 a	Terminal leaflet apex predominantly acute, and margin (coarsely) dentate. Bruised foliage emits pleasant scent.	<i>Rhus aromatica</i>
b	Terminal leaflet apex predominantly obtuse, and margin (deeply) lobed. Bruised foliage emits odd/unpleasant scent.	<i>Rhus trilobata</i>
05 a	Rachis predominantly winged, at least so between the upper most pair(s) of leaflets. ...	06
b	Rachis not winged (or occasionally winged in part of the foliage/especially strong growth). ..	10
06 a	Leaflet margin entire, or with a few teeth in apical half.	07
b	Leaflet margin dentate from apex to base.	08
07 a	Leaf length ≤5 cm. Leaflets 5-9.	<i>Rhus microphylla</i>
b	Leaf length 10-30 cm. Leaflets 9-15.	<i>Rhus copallinum</i>
08 a	Low suckering shrub <1 m, with short erect stem(s). Leaflets 9-13(-15). ...	<i>Rhus michauxii</i>
b	Shrub or tree. Leaflets 7-21.	09
09 a	Rachis wings obvious. Leaflets 7-13, size decreasing from leaf apex towards base.	<i>Rhus chinensis</i>
b	Rachis wings narrow. Leaflets 7-21, size +/- decreasing from midleaf towards base and apex.	<i>Rhus coriaria</i>
10 a	Leaflet margin entire, rarely with a few teeth/side (especially strong growth).	11
b	Leaflet margin dentate, +/- from apex to base with numerous teeth/side.	12
11 a	Leaflet 7-11, short petiolulate, branchlets glabrous (10× LENS).	<i>Rhus potaninii</i>
b	Leaflet 7-13, sessile, branchlets variably pubescent.	<i>Rhus punjabensis</i>
12 a	Rachis red, often glaucous at first <u>AND</u> completely glabrous (10× LENS).	<i>Rhus glabra</i>
b	Rachis greenish to red, sometimes glaucous in part <u>BUT</u> variably pubescent.	13
13 a	Rachis persisting densely hirsute (never glabrous/glaucous).	<i>Rhus typhina</i>
b	Rachis variably pubescent (decreases by autumn), sometimes glabrous and or glaucous in part.	<i>Rhus xpulvinata</i>

Taxa treated in this key.

Rhus aromatica
Rhus chinensis
Rhus copallinum
Rhus coriaria
Rhus glabra
Rhus integrifolia
Rhus michauxii

Rhus microphylla
Rhus ovata
Rhus potaninii
Rhus x pulvinata
Rhus punjabensis
Rhus trilobata
Rhus typhina

Taxa referred to other genera and synonymy (fide Plants of the World Online: [POWO](#)).

Rhus ambigua → *Toxicodendron orientale*
Rhus dentata → *Searsia dentata*
Rhus diversiloba → *Toxicodendron diversiloba*
Rhus glauca → *Searsia glauca*
Rhus griffithii → *Toxicodendron griffithii*
Rhus gueinzii → *Searsia gueinzii*
Rhus laevigata → *Searsia laevigata*
Rhus lancea → *Searsia lancea*
Rhus leptodictya → *Searsia leptodictya*
Rhus longifolia → *Protorhus longifolia*
Rhus longispina → *Searsia longispina*
Rhus lucida → *Searsia lucida*
Rhus orientale → *Toxicodendron orientale*

Rhus pentheri → *Searsia pentheri*
Rhus pyroides → *Searsia pyroides*
Rhus radicans → *Toxicodendron radicans*
Rhus rydbergii → *Toxicodendron rydbergii*
Rhus succedanea → *Toxicodendron succedaneum*
Rhus sylvestris → *Toxicodendron sylvestre*
Rhus toxicodendron → *Toxicodendron pubescens*
Rhus trichocarpa → *Toxicodendron trichocarpum*
Rhus undulata → *Searsia undulata*
Rhus verniciflua → *Toxicodendron vernicifluum*
Rhus vernix → *Toxicodendron vernix*
Rhus viminalis → *Searsia lancea*
Rhus wallichii → *Toxicodendron wallichii*

