Summersweet

Clethra alnifolia

Height: 6 feet

Spread: 5 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 4

Other Names: Sweet Pepperbush

Description:

One of the most fragrant of all shrubs for our gardens, and as a bonus, spikes of white flowers bloom in late summer when little else is in flower; neat, tidy habit of growth and good fall color; tends to sucker, needs moist acidic soil

Ornamental Features

Summersweet has masses of beautiful spikes of fragrant white flowers rising above the foliage from mid to late summer, which are most effective when planted in groupings. It has green deciduous foliage. The glossy round leaves turn an outstanding harvest gold in the fall.

Landscape Attributes

Summersweet is a multi-stemmed deciduous shrub with a shapely oval form. Its average texture blends into the landscape, but can be balanced by one or two finer or coarser trees or shrubs for an effective composition.

This shrub will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and is best pruned in late winter once the threat of extreme cold has passed. It is a good choice for attracting bees and butterflies to your yard. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Suckering

Summersweet is recommended for the following landscape applications;



Summersweet flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



Summersweet in fall
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens

Planting & Growing

Summersweet will grow to be about 6 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 5 feet. It tends to fill out right to the ground and therefore doesn't necessarily require facer plants in front, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 30 years.

This shrub does best in full sun to partial shade. It is quite adaptable, prefering to grow in average to wet conditions, and will even tolerate some standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. It is not particular as to soil type, but has a definite preference for acidic soils, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. Consider applying a thick mulch around the root zone in winter to protect it in exposed locations or colder microclimates. This species is native to parts of North America.



Summersweet in fall
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder