WINGED SUMAC
Nature's Own Lemonade Stand
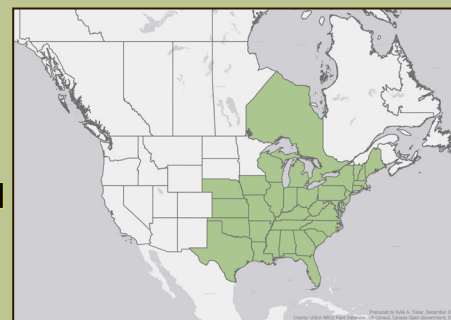
Environmental Message
July 2025

Did you know? Winged sumac (*Rhus copallinum*) is more than just a beautiful plant—its berries can be used to make a refreshing lemonade-like drink! Indigenous people and early settlers steeped the red, velvety fruits in water to create a tangy, vitamin C-rich beverage, often referred to as "sumac-ade." This natural drink is not only tasty but also highlights the plant's historical importance and versatility.

Human and Wildlife Uses. The red, velvety berries of winged sumac provide a critical winter food source for birds such as quail, robins, and bluebirds, as well as mammals like deer and squirrels. The flowers attract a wide array of pollinators, including bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects. For humans, the berries have been used as a natural dye and flavoring, while the plant's bark and leaves have been used medicinally in traditional remedies.

Border Zone Compatible. Winged sumac is a valuable addition in the border zone of electric utility rights-of-way. It thrives in sunny, open areas with well-drained soils, like utility corridors. The plant's dense growth can help suppress invasive species, while its average height of 10–15 feet allows it to provide cover without interfering with overhead utility lines. Winged sumac provides a natural barrier while enhancing the visual appeal of managed landscapes making it an ideal fit for maintaining biodiversity while minimizing maintenance costs.

Distribution Map

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