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How to Grow a Viburnum Shrub



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Planting, Growing, and Pruning Viburnums

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

Last Updated: April 17, 2025



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Viburnum shrubs, come in many forms, so there's bound to be one that fits your garden! Here's how to plant, grow, and care for viburnum shrubs at home.

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About Viburnum

For a flowering shrub with abundant benefits—fragrance, fruit, colorful foliage, pollinator appeal, and more—look no further than viburnums.

The species offers more than 150 evergreen, semi-evergreen, and deciduous woody plants from which to choose. Also known as cranberrybush, hobblebush, arrowwood, nannyberry, or snowball bush, viburnum range in size from 2 to 20 feet tall and usually serve in the landscape as screening, hedge, or focal points.

Depending on the variety, viburnum provides year-round visual interest: The cream/white or pale pink bloom clusters can be lace-cap, dome, and snowball-shaped, with intoxicating or light perfume (although some have no scent). In fall, the flowers, favored by bees and butterflies, give way to yellow, orange, red, pink, blue, or black fruits attractive to birds and wildlife,

and foliage on plants that are not evergreen change to glossy red or violet, or purple.

All this and viburnums are easy to care for: fast-growing, not fussy about soil, need little to no pruning, and seldom are troubled by diseases or pests.

Read Next

- [How to Grow Weigela Shrubs \(The Complete Guide\)](#)
- [The 15 Best Flowers That Bloom in Winter](#)
- [How to Choose Shrubs for Landscaping](#)

PLANTING

Viburnums thrive in full sun to partial or mostly shade, depending on the variety.

Provide moisture-retaining but well-draining, fertile soil. Add compost or aged manure, if necessary, before planting. The soil pH requirements

vary by species; pH 5.5 to 6.5 is average. Check the variety, test the soil, and amend it as required.

When to Plant Viburnum

- Fall planting is preferred, but early spring planting is also possible as long as the shrubs are kept well-watered throughout the spring and summer. If planting in the summer, water well during hot and dry periods.

How to Plant Viburnum

- Dig a hole as deep as the root ball and 2 times as wide. Set plants so that top roots are at the soil level or slightly below.
- Half-fill the hole with soil, and then water it well to settle the soil. Fill in with remaining soil.
- On the soil surface, form a rim of soil around the outer edge of the hole.
- Water inside the ring.

- Space plants 4 to 10 feet apart, depending on the variety's estimated size at maturity.



With their colorful leaves and red berries, viburnum offer plenty of fall and winter interest, too.

GROWING

- Water with a soaking once weekly if rainfall is less than 1 inch.
- Once established, mulch with 4 to 6 inches of pine straw or 2 to 3 inches of bark.
- Fertilizer is seldom applied. In spring, apply a few shovelfuls of compost or aged manure. In autumn, feed the roots by mixing whole fish meal with some compost.
- In early spring prune selectively to maintain height and spread.

- If an overgrown shrub requires a hard pruning (shearing), do it in early spring or after the bloom period.

Types

- *Viburnum dentatum* (aka **arrowwood**): scentless white lacecap flower clusters; blue-black berries; 6 to 10 feet high (or up to 15) and wide-mounded form; fall leaf colors of yellow, orange, red; hardy in Zones 2 to 8
- *V. lantana* (aka **wayfaringtree**): scentless creamy-white lacecap flower clusters; red-to-black berries; 10 to 15 feet high and wide; green leaves turn purplish-red in fall; hardy in Zones 3 to 7



Viburnum lantana

- V.

***plicatum* var. *tomentosum* (aka **dou-blefile, Japanese Snowball**):** scentless white flower balls; red-to-black berries; 8 to 10 feet high and wide; green leaves turn burgundy to purplish-red in fall; hardy in Zones 5 to 8

- **V. *x carlcephalum* (aka **fragrant snowball**):** fragrant white flower balls; red-to-black berries; 6 to 10 feet tall and wide; green leaves turn reddish-maroon in fall; hardy in Zones 6 to 8

- **V. *carlesii* (aka **Korean spice**):** very fragrant pink-to-white flower balls; blue-to-black berries; 4 to 5 (or up to 8) feet tall and wide; green leaves turn red to burgundy in fall; hardy in Zones 4 to 7

- **V. *setigerum* (aka **tea**):** scentless small white flower clusters; abundant bright red berries; 8 to 12 feet tall, 5 to 8 feet wide; green leaves turn purplish in fall; hardy in Zones 5 to 7

HARVESTING

Viburnum as Cut Flowers

Viburnum is one among many woody ornamentals that can be cut and put in a vase.

1. Cut thin branches when the buds are starting to open.
2. Recut the bottom of the stem before placing in a vase.
3. Change the water every 2 to 3 days and the blooms will last about 1 week.
4. Viburnum branches can also be forced into bloom in early spring.

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PESTS/DISEASES

Diseases: Anthracnose; Botryosphaeria canker and dieback; crown gall; algal leaf spot; bacterial leaf spot; fungal leaf spot; downy mildew; Powdery mildew; Armillaria root rot; Verticillium wilt.

Pests: Aphids; Nematodes, Root-knot; Root Weevils; Scale Insects; Spider mites; Thrips; Whiteflies.

WIT AND WISDOM

- The straight stems of arrowwood viburnum are believed to have been used as arrow shafts by a number of indigenous peoples in North America.
- Tea viburnum leaves were traditionally used to make—believe it or not—tea.
- Nannyberry viburnum's berries, dark blue at maturity, are edible raw or in jams and baked goods.

SHRUBS AND TREES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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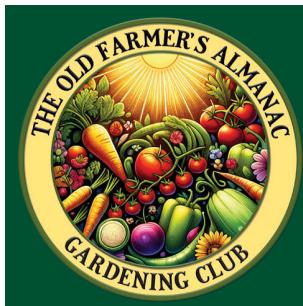
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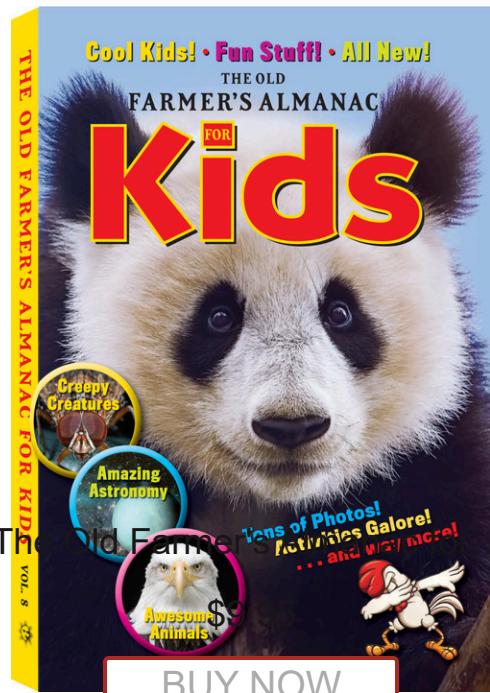
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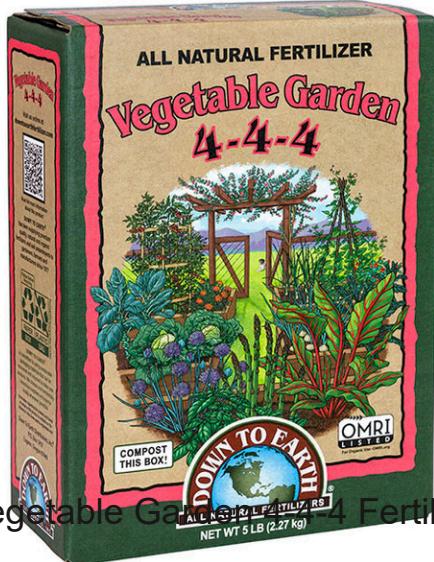
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