



Common Name: AMERICAN MOUNTAIN-ASH

Scientific Name: *Sorbus americana* Marshall

Other Commonly Used Names: American rowan

Previously Used Scientific Names: *Pyrus microcarpa* (Pursh) Sprengel, *Pyrus americana* (Marshall) DeCandolle

Family: Rosaceae (rose)

Rarity Ranks: G5/S1

State Legal Status: Special Concern

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: FACU

Description: **Shrub or small tree** up to 30 feet (10 meters) tall, usually shorter, with a short trunk and gray bark. **Twigs** stout, reddish-brown, with crescent shaped leaf scars. **Leaves** 6 - 10 inches (15 - 25 cm) long, alternate, with 9 - 17 opposite, toothed, lance-shaped leaflets; **leaf stalks** up to 3 inches long, red. **Leaflets** 1½ - 4 inches (4 - 10 cm) long, hairless, with dark green upper surfaces and whitish lower surfaces. **Flower clusters** 2¾ - 6 inches (6 - 15 cm) across, flat-topped, held at the tips of branches. **Flowers** about ¼ inch (6 - 8 mm) wide, with 5 tiny, white petals and many stamens. **Fruit** about ¼ inch (4 - 7 mm) across, round, orange-red.

Similar Species: The white, flat-topped flower clusters and compound leaves resemble elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*), a wetland shrub with soft, pithy stems and opposite leaves and leaflets. Staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*, Special Concern) has alternate leaves with opposite leaflets; its stems and fruits are very hairy, and its elongated, greenish-white flower cluster is found only at the top of the main stem. It occurs on rock outcrops and in open mountain forests in 5 north Georgia counties.

Related Rare Species: None in Georgia.

Habitat: Moist areas on rocky mountain tops, grassy balds, openings in high-elevation hardwood forests.

Life History: Mountain ash reproduces sexually and also by stump sprouting after disturbance. Its flowers are pollinated by a variety of insects. In areas where it is abundant, its fruits are an important food for birds and other wildlife which disperse the seeds. Deer are known to eat its leaves, twigs, and bark. Mountain ash is susceptible to bacterial fireblight which shrivels its leaves at the ends of branches.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering (June–July) but leaves and growth form are distinctive throughout the growing season; bright orange-red leaves are showy in the fall, and the fruits last through the winter.

Range: Georgia, north to Newfoundland and west to Minnesota and Saskatchewan.

Threats: Logging, clearing, and home-building on mountain summits and ridgelines.

Georgia Conservation Status: Five populations are known, most in the Chattahoochee National Forest.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Avoid logging or other mechanical clearing on high-elevation ridges and mountain summits.

Selected References:

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Date Compiled or Updated:

L. Chafin, Aug. 2008: original account

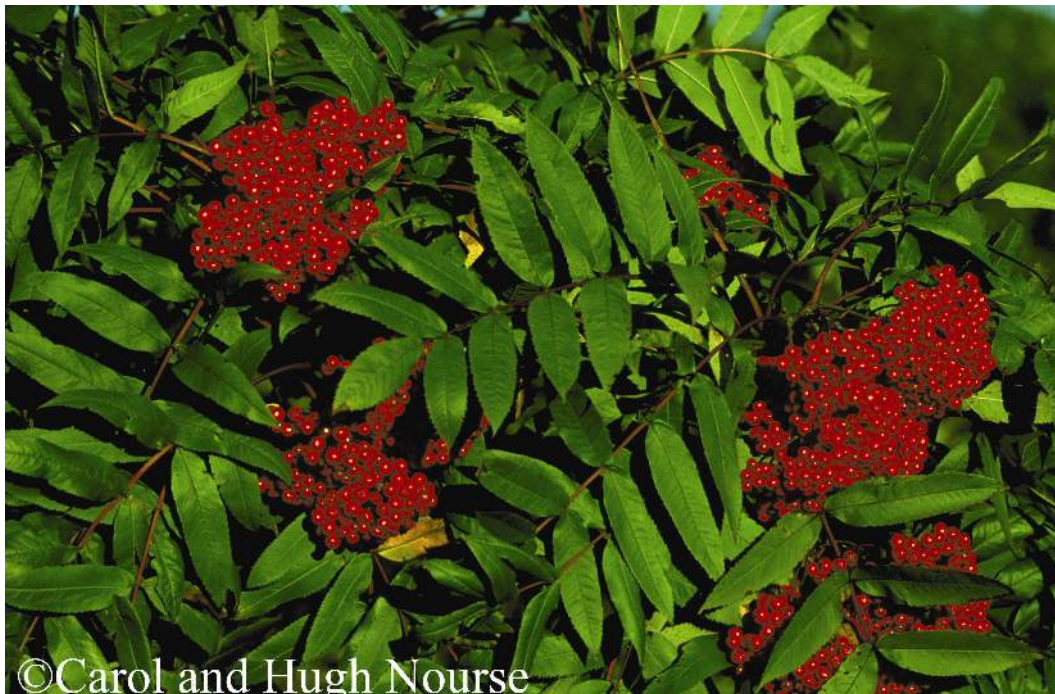
K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures

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Sorbus americana





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