



## SARATOGA HORTICULTURAL FOUNDATION, INC.

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### RIBES viburnifolium

"I'm looking for something to plant under oak trees", is one of the most asked questions of probably all Sonoma County nurseries, wholesale or retail. Mature native oaks require no irrigation beyond winter rains nor do they tolerate changes in grade around them. In an area currently undergoing tremendous growth, where homes are now commonly built around mature oaks, developers, builders and owners must take extra care around their trees. Thus, planting proper material around these oaks becomes increasingly important.

One example of a proper plant to use under oaks is Ribes viburnifolium, or Evergreen Currant. Ribes viburnifolium is a spreading shrub native to two places: Catalina Island in California and All Saints Bay in Baja California. It grows three feet tall, sometimes to six feet, by a least five feet wide. Leaves are a rich, dark green which are fragrant when wet or crushed and on wine red stems. The leaves are wine obovate to nearly round and leathery about 3/4 to 1 1/2 inches in diameter. The flowers are small 1/4 inch across, rosey red, appearing February-April.

Ribes viburnifolium makes an attractive ground cover and thrives in part shade. It can be grown in full sun near the coast but requires at least filtered or morning sun in the warmer inland valleys. Being drought tolerant once established makes it an ideal plant for xeriscaping. It can also be useful as a bank planting for erosion control. It is fairly disease and pest free. Taller stems should be pruned to promote three foot habit, otherwise little pruning is necessary.

When planted under oaks, Ribes viburnifolium provides an airy peaceful look due to its small leaves, wine-red stems and arching branches. The flowers can be produced profusely enough to give the planting a rosey look. A very satisfactory choice for what can be a difficult area to landscape.