



Sumac

Edible or poisonous?

Sumac (*Rhus coriaria*) is a reddish-purple powder that adds a zingy acidic flavour, due to its malic acid content. The dried fruit are ground and used as a brightly coloured garnish and is an ingredient in za'atar spice mix. Sumac grows on a shrub native to the Mediterranean and Middle East. It is in the Anacardiaceae family, along with cashews, pistachios and mangoes. The stems and leaves of sumac species are used to tan soft Moroccan leather. Staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*), from North America, used to be a very popular ornamental plant in Britain.

The culinary spice sumac isn't the only edible form of sumac. More than twenty sumac species can be found growing in North America and most of these are edible. However, two species of sumac are highly poisonous and should be avoided at all costs. Let's find out more.



STAG'S HORN SUMAC (*Rhus typhina*)
is an edible form of sumac but you should always check with a trained gardener or botanist before you try to eat it.



SMOOTH SUMAC (*Rhus glabra*)
is an edible form of sumac but you should always check with a trained gardener or botanist before you try to eat it.



FRAGRANT SUMAC (*Rhus aromatica*)
is an edible form of sumac but you should always check with a trained gardener or botanist before you try to eat it.



DESERT SUMAC (*Rhus microphyllia*)
is an edible form of sumac but you should always check with a trained gardener or botanist before you try to eat it.



LEMONADE BERRY SUMAC (*Rhus integrifolia*) is an edible form of sumac but you should always check with a trained gardener or botanist before you try to eat it.



SUGAR BUSH SUMAC (*Rhus ovata*)
is an edible form of sumac but you should always check with a trained gardener or botanist before you try to eat it.



DWARF SUMAC (*Rhus copallina*)
is an edible form of sumac but you should always check with a trained gardener or botanist before you try to eat it.



POISON SUMAC (*Rhus vernix*)
is a poisonous type of sumac. It can cause terrible skin reactions as well as being toxic to eat.



POISON IVY (*Rhus toxicodendron*)
is a poisonous type of sumac. It can cause terrible skin reactions as well as being toxic to eat.



Photo credits

smooth sumac (*Rhus glabra*)

Eric Hunt, *Rhus glabra*.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rhus_glabra_AR.jpg

fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*)

Salicyna, *Rhus aromatica*.

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desert sumac (*Rhus microphylla*)

JerryFriedman, *Rhus microphylla*.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rhus_microphylla_fruta.jpg

lemonade berry sumac (*Rhus integrifolia*)

docentjoyce, *Rhus integrifolia*.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lemonadeberry_Rhus_integrifolia_in_bloom,_MBSP.jpg

sugar bush sumac (*Rhus ovata*)

Eugene Zelenko,

Rhus ovata. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rhus_ovata_2.jpg

dwarf sumac (*Rhus copallina*)

Katja Schulz, *Rhus copallina*.

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poison sumac (*Rhus vernix*)

Freekee, *Rhus vernix*.

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