

## Drought Tolerant Shrubs

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Even though we have had record moisture levels this year we need to remind ourselves that we live in an area that is more prone to drought than to average or above average moisture.

The first plant I would like to highlight is Winter Fat (*Ceratoides lanata*) this plant is in the goosefoot family and is a native to our Wyoming rangelands. It generally only grows less than a foot tall but can reach as high as three feet, with a spread of from two to four feet. The color is a light bluish green color with woolly hairy leaves and flowers. In the spring time when flowering it is a soft showy plant often mistaken for one of the sagebrush plants. This plant will grow under most any condition in Wyoming paying no attention to soil type or moisture level. The USDA zone rating is three. The best place for this long lived plant is in an area that will receive very little care. However it is one that can adapt to a garden area that receives some care.

A tall shrub the Sea Buckthorn (*hippaphae rhamnoides*) will reach heights of eight to eighteen feet and widths of eight to twelve feet. This shrub is native to the Himalayas and China, but is adaptable to our clay soils and will also do well in better drained soils. This shrub has small greenish blossoms with narrow silvery green leaves. The orange fruit which forms next to the stems is edible and quite showy. The USDA rating is zone three. This is another long lived shrub, but care should be taken when planting this one. This plant should be used as a barrier plant or a hedge due to its thorny nature and suckering roots. This is quite a showy shrub that has not been utilized in Wyoming.

The bush or shrubby cinquefoil (*potentilla fruticosa*) is a native of North America. It is widely used in a lot of landscaping and does well. A small shrub from one to four feet tall and from two to four feet wide is widely adaptable to most soil types. The summer long buttercup yellow bloom designates this shrub. This shrub will do well in most drought conditions but does prefer a little additional moisture in the summer months. There are many cultivars to choose from so finding one that works for your landscaping needs is pretty easy. The biggest disadvantage with this shrub is it can get spider mites.

The three leaf Sumac or Skunkbush (*rhus trilobata*) is another native plant. However as the name implies this one is not selected for its appealing fragrance especially when the leaves or branches are cut. However this drought tolerant shrub which grows from three to six feet tall and wide is adapted to a wide range of soil types and conditions. It is USDA zone rated four and has a long lifespan and moderate growth rate. The glossy dark green leaves turn to showy fall colors of yellows and reds. The small red berry like fruit which has a lemon flavor persists into the winter. This berry like fruit was used by Native Americans in making pemmican or could be crushed and mixed with water and sugar to make a lemonade type drink. This shrub does sucker some and is best used as a hedge or to help with erosion on a dry hill side. I like the

hardiness of this plant especially if left to its own accord and the fall colors is especially nice to have in a landscaped area.

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