Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius* (L.) Maxim. [Rosaceae]) is a small shrub, 1 to 3 m (3 to 10 ft) tall. The shrub is multi-stemmed, spreading to 2.5 m (8 ft). Bark peels off in thin papery strips, resembling the number nine in shape, exposing brown inner bark. It occurs naturally on gravel bars, rocky banks and bluffs along streams and moist thickets, often over-hanging the water. This species is adaptable to a very wide range of soil and site conditions, from moist to dry, acid to alkaline, and gravelly to heavy clay. It will grow in partial shade to full sun and is found from Quebec west to Minnesota, South Dakota and Colorado, south to Oklahoma to Georgia and north to New York.

Although sometimes used in landscape for border screens and hedges, its ragged appearance makes it more suitable for wildland plantings. Ninebark grown at the George O White State Forest Nursery in Licking, Missouri, is used by private landowners and on public land primarily for erosion control, wetland plantings, and wildlife habitat (Figure 1).

**SEED COLLECTION AND STORAGE**

Small white, 5-petaled flowers bloom from May to June. Flowers are about 6 to 8 mm (0.25 to 0.33 in) in diameter and form in many-flowered, flat-topped clusters. In Missouri, fruits ripen from August to early October and are small, dry pods hanging in drooping, papery

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**KEY WORDS:** bareroot, nursery, seeds, future applications

**NOMENCLATURE:** (plants) USDA NRCS (1999); (insects) ITIS (2000)
clusters that resemble bellows. Each pod contains 2 to 5 yellowish, shiny seeds.

We collect seedpods in late September. To allow them to further ripen and dry, we place them in elevated wooden boxes with standard house screen on the bottom. The very small seeds (< 2 mm) often fall through the screen, so we clean the floor before placing pods in the boxes and sweep up any seeds that fall through. Once pods have dried and begun to open we tumble them in our custom-made tumbler made of wood and 6-mm (0.25-in) mesh screen that resembles a bingo game tumbler. Seeds fall to the floor and pods remain in the tumbler. Again, we sweep up the seeds and further clean them using a Clipper (Blufiton, Indiana) with a 1-18 screen and the fan set at the lowest possible air flow.

Seeds excess to our annual needs are dried down to about 8% moisture content, placed in plastic bags inside sealed drums, and frozen at about –15 °C (5 °F). We have had good success germinating seeds stored 5 y at this temperature.

**REFERENCES**


**AUTHOR INFORMATION**

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Figure 1 • A successful crop of 1+0 ninebark at GO White State Nursery.

Photo by Gregory A Hoss