

SORBUS DECORA (Sarg.) Hyland
Western Mountain-ash

FAMILY: Rosaceae

SYNONYM: *Pyrus decora* (Sarg.) C.K. Schneid.

HABIT: Shrub or small tree to 10 m.; flowering May, June; fruiting September- November.

SIMILAR SPECIES: This species is very similar to the European mountain ash, *Pyrus aucuparia*. Distinction can be made as follows: *S. decora* has acute leaflets 2-3 times as long as wide; winter buds glutinous; inner bud scales conspicuously brown-ciliate; hypanthium glabrous. *P. aucuparia* has the lower leaf surfaces, the inflorescence branches, and hypanthia all densely white-villous.

TOTAL RANGE: Greenld., Lab., and Nfld. to MN, s. to NY, OH, IN, IA, and ascending to subalpine areas.

STATE RANGE: Extant only in Ashtabula and Geauga counties. There are pre-1960 collections from Trumbull County and a strangely disjunct population in Licking County.

STATE STATUS: 1980-Endangered, 1982-E, 1984-E.

HABITAT: Swampy or damp woods and borders, rocky slopes, shores.

HAZARDS: Extended soil saturation, overshadowing through succession, competition against seedlings by dense herbaceous growth, deer browsing.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown, presumed good if introduced into suitable habitat in extreme northeast Ohio. Otherwise presumed poor.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect mature flowering or fruiting branchlets or winter twigs.

COMMENTS: Some authors raise the subgenera of *Pyrus* to generic level (see Synonym). However, this appears to be a distinct taxon, whether considered under *Pyrus* or *Sorbus*.

This is normally a northern species of the sub-climax to climax northern coniferous forests. It is often associated with alder, Labrador-tea, and mountain or red maples. Northern Ohio is the southern limit of its range.

This small tree is easily overlooked or misidentified. The European mountain ash is adventive in northern Ohio in the same areas and habitats as *S. decora*. This species should be sought throughout northern Ohio. It may be more frequent than the records indicate.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Earby, S. 1974. Mountain ashes. p. 98-101. In: J.D. Gill and W.M. Healy (eds.). Shrubs and vines for northeastern wildlife. USDA For. Serv. Tec. Rep. NE-9. 180 p.

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