

Henry's Viburnum

Viburnum henryi

Carole Bordelon

Viburnum henryi, commonly known as Henry's viburnum, was discovered by Augustine Henry and introduced to the west by E. H. Wilson in 1901. Native to central China, *V. henryi* is relatively rare in cultivation in the United States, existing primarily in public gardens. When this plant was discovered during the fall 1996 NACPEC expedition to the Qinling Mountains in China's Shaanxi province, the team of collectors considered this find a high point of their trip. They were impressed by its beautiful dark green foliage and its large clusters of glossy red fruit. The seeds were collected and propagated for trialing, and fourteen years later, *V. henryi* is still an impressive plant growing at the United States National Arboretum and the Morris Arboretum.

Henry's viburnum is an evergreen shrub, typically growing 7 to 15 feet (2.1 to 4.6 meters) tall, and is hardy in USDA Zones 7 to 10 (average annual minimum temperature 0 to 40°F [-17.7 to 4.4°C]). Its growth habit is lax, especially when young, but its spreading, arching branches can be pruned into a small upright tree, if desired. Otherwise, little aesthetic pruning is required (any pruning should be done after flowering).



PAUL MEYER



DANIEL MOSQUIN, UBIC BOTANICAL GARDEN

The attractive foliage and flowers of Henry's viburnum.

DANIEL MOSQUIN, UBC BOTANICAL GARDEN



CAROLE BORDELON



Henry's viburnum bears fruit that turns from red to black in late summer. It has an upright, open growth habit.

This handsome plant has year-round ornamental interest as well. In the spring months, the new foliage emerges with a bronzy cast that matures to a glossy dark green, which is held throughout the growing season. The narrow, 2 to 5 inch (5 to 13 centimeters) long leaves are serrated above the middle of the leaf and may sport attractive red petioles. During the fall, the leaves may take on a purplish-red hue—depending on sun exposure—that persists into winter. During winter, the grayish brown bark is revealed. *V. henryi* blooms in June, displaying slightly fragrant white flowers that occur in panicles that are 2 to 4 inches (5 to 10 centimeters) tall and wide. The flowers are attractive to both bees and butterflies. In July, terminal clusters of glossy red fruit appear, covering the entire plant. As the summer wanes, the red fruit matures to black.

Henry's viburnum grows best in full sun or part shade and prefers a well-drained, slightly acid, moist soil. It is not a heavy feeder, but it can be fertilized in late winter and after flowering. Applying a mulch such as composted leaves reduces the need for supplemental watering and fertilizer. No disease or insect problems causing substantial damage to the plant have been noted. The ideal propagation method is by semi-hardwood cuttings some time between late May and late June. Propagation by seed is also possible, but requires at least one cycle of warm/cold stratification and may take up to several years to germinate.

Viburnum henryi is easy to grow and fits into a variety of landscapes. It is recommended for gardens in the southeastern and northwestern sections of the United States but, since it has also performed well in the Washington, D.C., area, it is worth testing in protected sites in Zone 6 areas. Henry's viburnum makes a worthy addition to gardens and may be a more common sight in the future.

Carole Bordelon is Supervisory Horticulturist, Gardens Unit, at the United States National Arboretum in Washington, District of Columbia.