



Flowering Shrub: Smoke Bush

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Smoke Bush Flowers Look like Puffs of Smoke

The Smoke bush or Smoke tree are part of the family Anacardiaceae (a relative of Sumac) and genus *Cotinus*. If you are looking for a deciduous shrub that is eye-catching and a little different, this shrub is for you. The colourful foliage really heats up in fall, deepening to brilliant shades of purple, red or orange - yellow, depending on the variety. As the large, loose clusters of tiny greenish flower blossoms fade, the flower stalks get longer and by midsummer are covered with fuzzy purple or pink flowers. They look like puffs of smoke – hence the common name smoke bush or smoke tree.

Varieties to Plant

Cotinus coggygria (European Smoke Tree) grows 4m tall, and is usually a multi-branching shrub. It develops large, puffy plumes of flowers that start out green and gradually turn a smokey-pink. The green foliage turns red, orange and yellow in fall.

'Royal Purple', grows to 4m. Leaves emerge rich maroon-red and darken to reddish-black. Rich purple fall colour.

'Ancot' Golden Spirit grows to 2.5m and has golden yellow leaves all season turning shades of coral, orange and red in fall. It has plumes of tiny white flowers and can tolerate more moist locations.

Preferred Conditions

Smokebush grows well in full sun or partial shade. It prefers soil of average fertility that is moist and well drained, but it will adapt to all but very wet soils. Really fertile soil will often make this bush grow too quickly and possibly be short-lived. It can tolerate a slightly higher PH. Depending on the variety, it can be hardy to Zone 4 or 5. It can be trained to be a large shrub or tree form. All varieties are very fast growing.

Care and Pruning

A newly transplanted Smoke bush may take several seasons to re-establish itself in its new location and during this time, the tree or shrub may produce few or no blossoms. Pruning the Smoke bush is best done in late winter or very early spring. If the plant is young, you could choose a leader and encourage it to become a tree form. To leave as a shrub, prune to desired height, removing all dead or broken branches. If you prefer the foliage over the flowers or you don't have the space to let it grow free-range, you can do a hard prune six inches above the ground. This will produce a shrub that is fuller with very attractive foliage. However, you must be aware that you will forfeit the flowers, since Smoke bush blooms on old growth only.

Problems you Might Encounter

Verticillium wilt and powdery mildew are possible problems. The purple-leaved smoke bush are more likely to be affected by powdery mildew.

Learn more about smoke bush [here](#)>