

## ***Symphoricarpos albus*, Snowberry**

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### **General Botanical Characteristics**

*Symphoricarpos albus*, commonly known as Snowberry for its snow-white berries, is a deciduous shrub that is densely branched and varies in height from 3 feet to 4.5 feet. Snowberry can reach heights of 6 feet in riparian areas. They can be identified by their lobed, opposite leaves and clumps of fruit that commonly remain on the plant over winter. It propagates both by seed and rhizomes.



### **Seasonal Development**

Snowberry begins budding in April to May and leaves become full-grown within a month of sprouting. Flowers appear any time from May to August and may be present as late as September. Peak flowering time is June and July. Fruit ripening times are also variable, but typically occur during late August and early September, coinciding closely with leaf fall.

### **Distribution/Habitat**

Snowberry occurs as far north as Alaska, south to California and east to North Carolina. Common snowberry is considered subdominant with Ponderosa Pine in Oregon, and is considered subdominant to Douglas Hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*) and in dense tall shrub communities with Wood's Rose (*Rosa woodsii*). Some species commonly associated with Snowberry include Ocean spray (*Holodiscus discolor*) and Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*).

### **Interesting Facts**

- Snowberry was used on hair as soap, and the fruits and leaves mashed and applied to cuts or skin sores as a poultice and to soothe sore, runny eyes.
- The bark was used for medicinal teas, to treat tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases. A brew made from the entire plant was used as a tonic.
- The straight branches made good arrow shafts and pipe stems.

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### **References**

University of Connecticut Plant Database. 9 November 2002, <http://www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/>.

US Forest Service Shrub Database. 9 November 2002.  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/shrub/>.

Photo from CalFlora Plant Database, November 2002, <http://www.calflora.org>.