

Euonymus atropurpureus

[Synonyms : *Euonymus caroliniensis*, *Euonymus latifolius*]

WAHOO is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to central and eastern North America it has small, dark purple flowers, and leaves that turn pale yellow in Autumn.

It is also known as American spindle tree, Arrow-wood, Bitter ash, Bleeding-heart tree, Burning bush, Bursting heart, Eastern burning bush, Eastern wahoo, Euonymous bark, Indian arrow, Indian arrowroot, Indian arrow-wood, Indian bitter, Large-leaved spindle, Purple strawberry bush, Skewer wood, Spindle tree, Wakoo, and *Wanaha-i-mo-thi* (Omaha and Ponca North American Indian).

Warning – the bark can be poisonous in large doses. The fruit is also alleged to be poisonous.

Atropurpureus is derived from Latin *atro-* (black, dark) and *purpureo-* (purple) components meaning ‘dark purple’.

The heavy, hard wood was used by North American Indian tribes to make arrows.

Wahoo was a source of medicine for several North American Indian tribes, including the Mohican Indians. The inner bark was used by some tribes, such as the Winnebago, to treat some female disorders, and the outer bark was used by the Meskwaki Indians for some eye problems and for treating facial sores.

White tail deer feast on the leaves and twigs, and birds enjoy the seeds.

Wahoo plays its part in a children’s classic. In the *Uncle Remus* books of the American author, Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908) the bark fibre is used to weave horse-collars, and Brer Rabbit mentions it when Brer Fox pretends to be dead. He says

Brer Fox look like he dead, yit he don’t do like he dead. Dead fokes
hists der behime leg en holler *Wahoo!* w’en a man come to see ‘um.

Medicinally, herbalists have used the bark as a digestive aid. It has also been used locally to treat some venereal disease.