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Viburnum prunifolium

[Synonyms : *Viburnum bushii*, *Viburnum pomifolium*, *Viburnum prunifolium* var. *bushii*, *Viburnum prunifolium* var. *globosum*, *Viburnum pyrifolium*]

HAW is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to eastern North America it has tiny pure white flowers and leaves that turn red and yellow in Autumn.

It is also known as American blackhaw, American sloe, *Amerikanischer Schneeball* (German), Black haw, Cramp bark, *Häggolvon* (Swedish), *Heisi* (Finnish), *Kalina višňolistá* (Czech), Sheepberry, Sloe, Sloe-leaved viburnum, Southern black haw, Stagbush, Swamp haw, Sweet haw, and Sweet viburnum.

Prunifolium is made up of the genus name *Prunus* and Latin *-folia* (leaved) components meaning ‘with leaves like those of that (plum) genus’.

Not only did the Meskwaki North American Indians eat the fresh berries but they also made them into jam.

The plant provided a source of medicines for several North American Indian tribes. While Delaware and Micmac Indians used it in treating some female problems, Cherokee Indians favoured it as an agent for causing sweating and as a treatment for convulsions, smallpox and fever generally. The Cherokee also took the root bark as a tonic.

The small bloomy, bluish-black berries (which are sweeter than those of the guelder-rose, *Viburnum opulus*) can be used for cooking in just the same way.

As with some other fruits the American Hoosier Poet of Indiana, James Whitcomb Riley (1849-1916) wrote vividly in this instance in his *Rhymes of Childhood*

Ah! will any minstrel say,
In his sweetest roundelay,
What is sweeter, after all,
Than black haws, in early Fall? –
Fruit so sweet the frost first sat,
Dainty-toothed, and nibbled at!

Medicinally, the stem and particularly the root bark have been and still are used in folk medicine to treat some female disorders. Today haw is also used in homoeopathic treatments.