



# CHRISTENSEN'S PLANT CENTER

## Wholesale Supplier To Landscape Professionals

### Cage Match?

Wrestle Mania? Major League Baseball Pitching Duel? Actually, this is Eurasia vs. the Americas – Anacardiac style!



These are Cashew cousins fighting for their rightful place in today's landscape. No guns, no bullets, just smoke. From the Old World there are many contenders. In ancient times *Rhus cotinus* (now *Cotinus coggygria*), the wild olive was used as a firebreak between volatile olive trees.

Formerly Venetian Sumac, we've become accustomed to varieties such as 'Royal Purple', 'Velvet Cloak', 'Daydream', and 'Golden Spirit' Smokebush (or sometimes -tree). The Eurasians bring us foliage color unequaled in the garden – brilliant purples with glaucous coating and more recently the yellows of 'Golden Spirit'.



Not to be outdone, the lone contender of the Americas, *C. obovatus*, is a large, bold, pear-shaped specimen with variant fall display. Ironically, some of the best pictures, I found, were from Kew Gardens, London.

But stop arguing, stop the fighting. We know the whole family is nuts. What is more important is what they have in common. When crushed their



foliage is reminiscent of another more distant family member – *Rhus aromatica* (Fragrant Sumac). They share similar uses in the landscape – mass plantings and specimen – with exceptional fall color changes.

What they share most are panicles unlike any other, inflorescence gone wild with hairy pedicels and peduncles in shades of pinks, purples, and tan. These grow as to inhibit the production of both flower petal and seed.

The real beauty of *Cotinus* is the uniqueness of its preemptive and seemingly chaotic floral display - petals be damned attitude. You gotta admire that!



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