

BY MIKE KREBILL

Wild Sumac Lemonade

A REFRESHINGLY TART, WILD FORAGED SUMMER TREAT

Inspired by our wild foods adventure feature story on page 22, harvesting sumac fruit to make this invigorating drink is a perfect way to spend a summer afternoon. Forager Mike Krebill of Keokuk shares his favorite method.

Gather berry clusters from staghorn sumac or smooth sumac trees in late summer, enough for four cups of berries. The clusters resemble dark red miniature Christmas trees, with the staghorn variety covered in fine fuzz. Cut stems just below the berry clusters.

Sumac flavor varies widely. The finished product may require no sweetening or as much as a full cup of sweetener.

- 1)** Pick berries off fruit heads until you have four cups. Pick through to remove any caterpillars. Place in strainer and shake over a wastebasket to remove any dirt or dried flower parts.
- 2)** Crisscross two pieces of cheesecloth at right angles. Place cleaned berries in the middle, draw up sides and tie with string to form giant tea bag.
- 3)** Place bag in pitcher and cover with one quart boiling water. Dunk until water turns dark, clear red. Add one quart cold water.
- 4)** Sweeten to taste with honey or sugar. Refrigerate.



Iowa has four sumac varieties, one shown right. Iowa is devoid of poison sumac, a variety found in northern Minnesota and Wisconsin with white berries. All parts of the poison variety can cause an allergic reaction and should be avoided.

