



WACD Plant Materials Center

## SITKA ALDER

- Common Name:** Sitka Alder
- Scientific Name:** *Alnus sinuata*
- Distribution:** Sitka Alder occurs from Alaska south to northern California. It extends from lowland coastal areas in the west, east into much of Idaho and Montana.
- Growth Habit:** The growth habit of Sitka Alder can vary based upon the site it occupies. It often only grows in a shrubby form to 10 feet tall along streams, but can grow to 30 feet tall with a more upright habit in upland open sites.
- Adaptability:** Sitka Alder is most often found in moist to wet sites. It is not known to be particularly drought tolerant. It is primarily a riparian dweller, and an outstanding species where soils are noticeably wet and drainage is poor. It occurs in shade as an understory species, or in very exposed, sunny sites.
- Comments:** Sitka Alder is a good example of a pioneering riparian species. It is often found establishing in recently deglaciated sites in Canada and Alaska. It often inhabits avalanche chutes in higher elevations within its range. It is a 'soil-building' species. Once established, this strong rooted species traps soil and organic debris, building up a scoured site. It is also a nitrogen fixing species, meaning it can take atmospheric nitrogen and convert it to a form of nitrogen in the soil available to plants. This results in creating a site suitable for a wider range of other species to naturalize the area.