

# Sacred Bamboo, Nandina

SHRUBS



F. Naiton

***Nandina domestica*** Thunb. **NADO**

**Plant.** Evergreen erect shrub to 8 feet (2.5 m) in height, with multiple bushy stems that resemble bamboo, glossy bipinnately compound green (or reddish) leaves, white to pinkish flowers in terminal clusters, and bright red berries in fall and winter.

**Stem.** Large compound leaves resembling leafy branches, woody leafstalk bases persisting as stubby branches, and overlapping sheaths encasing the main stem. Stubby branches whorled alternately up the stem and tightly stacked near terminals for a given year's growth. The overlapping sheaths on the main stem give the appearance of bamboo, thus, the common name. Stem fleshy and greenish gray near terminal, becoming woody barked and tan to brown with fissures towards the base. Wood bright yellow.

**Leaves.** Alternately whorled, bipinnately compound on 1.5 to 3 feet (0.5 to 1 m) slender leafstalks, often reddish tinged with joints distinctly segmented. Leafstalk bases clasping stems with a V-notch on the opposite side of attachment. Nine to eighty-one nearly sessile leaflets, lanceolate to diamond-shaped, 0.5 to 4 inches (1.2 to 10 cm) long and 0.4 to 1.2 inches (1 to 3 cm) wide. Glossy light green to dark green sometimes red tinged or burgundy.

**Flowers.** May to July. Terminal (or axillary) panicles of several hundred flowers, 4 to 10 inches (10 to 25 cm) long. Pink in bud, opening to three (two to four) lanceolate deciduous petals, white to cream, with yellow anthers 0.2 to 0.3 inch (6 to 8 mm) long. Fragrant.

**Fruit and seeds.** September to April. Dense terminal and axillary clusters of fleshy, spherical berries 0.2 to 0.3 inch (6 to 8 mm). Light green ripening to bright red. Two hemispherical seeds.

**Ecology.** Occurs under forest canopies and near forest edges. Shade tolerant. Seedlings frequent in vicinity of old plantings. Varying leaf colors in the various cultivars, some of which do not produce viable seeds. Colonizes by root sprouts and spreads by animal-dispersed seeds.

**History and use.** Introduced from eastern Asia and India in the early 1800s. Widely planted as an ornamental, now escaped and spreading from around old homes and recent landscape plantings. Sterile seeded reddish cultivars available.

States with suspected  
infestations are  
shown in gray.

**Sacred Bamboo, *Nandina*****2113**