

WACD PLANT MATERIALS CENTER

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Sitka Alder (*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 de-glaciated 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.

