



## SPECKLED ALDER

*Alnus incana* ssp. *Rugosa* (Du Roi) Clausen

**S**peckled alder is very common in Maine, usually growing in wet areas along brooks, in swamps and in pastures. It sprouts readily and is a nuisance on pasture land. Alder usually occurs as a shrub, rarely as a small tree. It is seldom more than 4 inches in diameter and 20 feet in height.

The **bark** is smooth, dark chocolate brown, and marked with white, horizontal, elongated spots called lenticels.

The **leaves** are alternate, 2–3 inches long, usually broadly ovate; and the texture is rough or rugose as the scientific name implies. The edges are unevenly or doubly-toothed.

The **flowers** are in catkins, and open before the leaves in spring. The purplish, wax-like male catkins are pre-formed the previous fall. The fruit is woody and cone-like, with a very short stalk.

The **winter buds** are short-stalked and maroon, with few scales showing.

The **twigs** are reddish-brown; the pith is triangular in cross section.

The **wood** is light and soft, and has very little commercial use. The wood discolors very rapidly on exposure to air. Baskets for the florist industry are made from small diameter stems. In the past, the wood was used in hand forges, because of the intense heat it produces when burned.

Two other species, **green or mountain alder**—*Alnus viridis* (Vill.) Lam. & DC. *Spp. Crispa* (Ait.) Tirrill)—and **hazel alder** (*Alnus serrulata* (Ait.) Willd.) occur as shrubs.

