Physocarpus capitatus
(fy-so-KAR-pus kap-ih-TAY-tus)

Pacific Ninebark
Deciduous Shrub
6’ – 12’ tall & wide
Moderate Water
Full Sun/Part Shade
USDA Zone 5 to 8

This Washington native is called “ninebark” because it was believed to have nine layers of bark on the stem. This tough, deciduous shrub has open, straggly, angled branches, whose bark exfoliates in long irregular strips. Late May through July attractive white dome shaped flower clusters resembling spirea appear, being at their height of bloom in June. Blooms give way to small reddish brown fruits occasionally eaten by birds. Leaves turn a golden shade in fall.

This highly adaptable shrub likes best moist well-drained soil in the sun or half sun, and may be the perfect choice for a naturally moist area. However, it will tolerate more shade, clay soil, and although thought of as a wetland plant, it can be drought tolerant. It will grow best in acid soil.

Ninebark is easily propagated from cuttings. Left to its own devices Ninebark spreads by underground runners. Because only the previous years' limbs exfoliate, with too regular a pruning schedule, the bark never will get interesting.

Physocarpus capitatus. It forms a graceful, slightly arching thicket, perfect for a mixed hedgerow or natural, wooded area attractive to birds, providing a good source of cover and protected nesting sites. As the shrub and older stems mature, the exfoliating limbs will eventually gain in character, to become one of the most interesting species of an ornamental nature in winter.

Photos courtesy of Oregon State University
http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ldplants/phcap9.htm
http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ldplants/phcap7.htm
http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ldplants/phcap6.htm