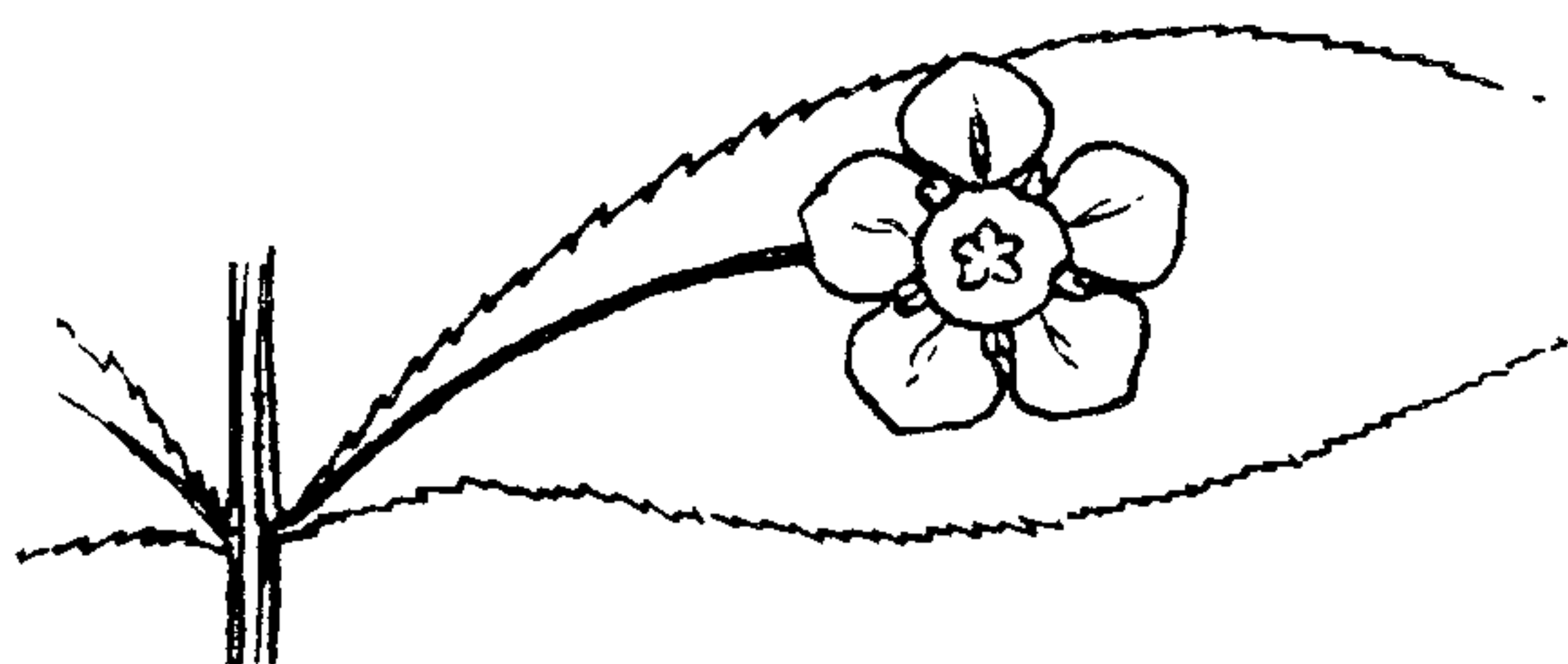


LOOK AGAIN !

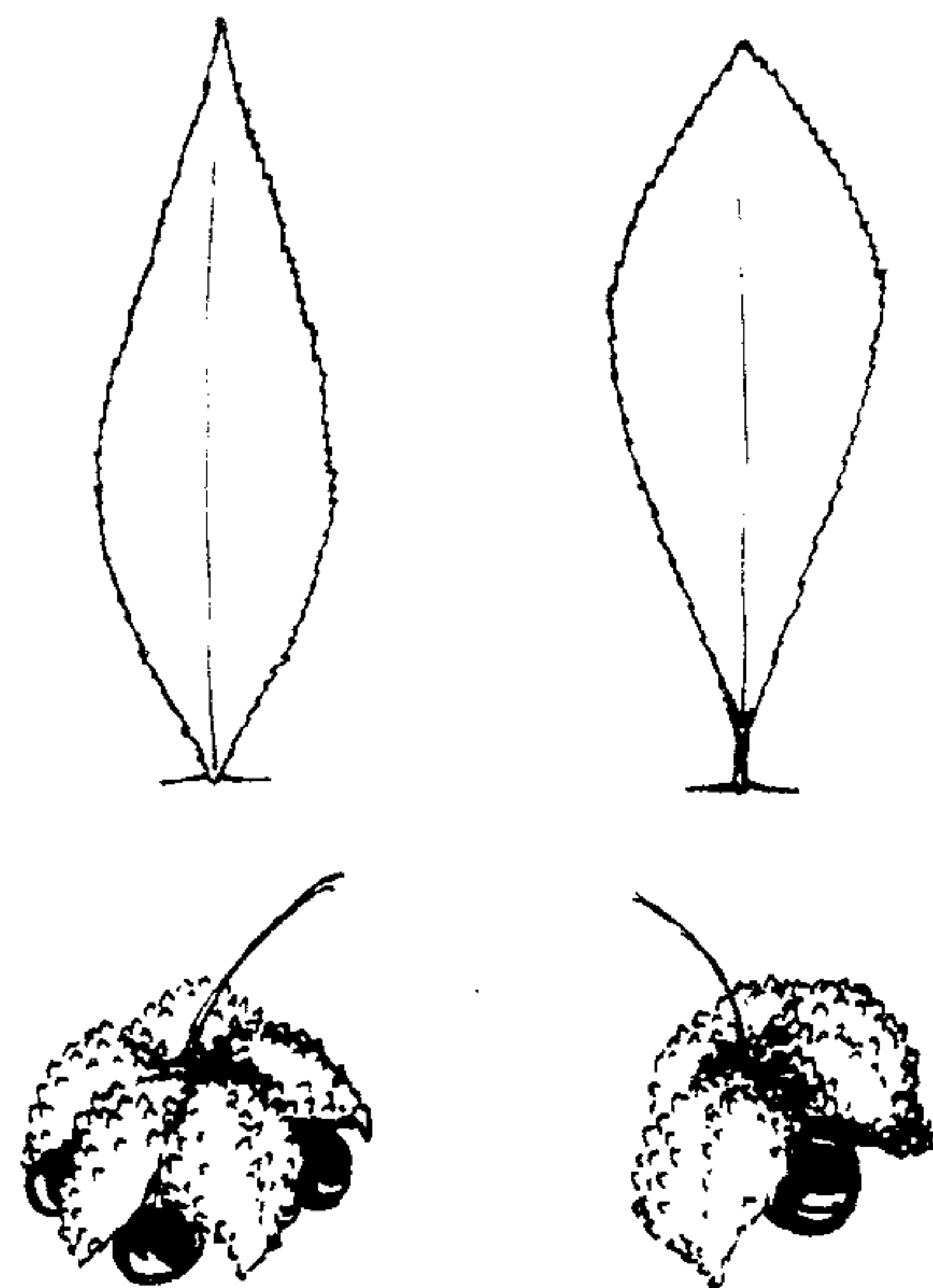
Anyone seeing Euonymus americanus for the first time when it is in flower may be excused for raising an eyebrow at being told that its popular name is "Hearts a'Bustin' with Love." After all, the flowers (which bloom just when the spring woods are their prettiest) have little going for them. They are sparse in number, modest in size, and so flat as to appear almost two-dimensional. And their color is so undistinguished that no one label suits; one must call it something like "pale creamy purplish yellow-green."



million arils, which in turn enclose the seeds. These colorful fruits also account for another name, "Strawberry Bush."

But a return visit in September furnishes all the explanation that is needed for the quaint colloquial name. Where the drab little flowers had been there now are brilliant pink, warty capsules opening up to expose shiny ver-

Although many of us are not aware of it, the "Hearts a'Bustin'" appellation is also given to a similar species, Euonymus obovatus. Both are square-stemmed bluish green shrubs with flowers that are virtually identical, but Euonymus americanus is erect and may attain a height of six feet, while in E. obovatus the main stem is prostrate and the ascending branches do not exceed two feet. For this reason, the latter is sometimes called "Running Strawberry Bush." The specific name also holds another clue: the leaves are obovate, or widest above the middle. The most striking difference, however, is seen in the fruits, which in the case of E. americanus are usually five-lobed whereas those of E. obovatus split into only three parts.



Both of these shrubs belong to the Staff-tree Family, which counts among its other members Celastrus orbiculatus, the rampant Oriental bittersweet vine which has overwhelmed native shrubs and trees in some areas, and C. scandens, the less aggressive American bittersweet. In each of these, the crimson arils revealed by the splitting of the yellow-orange capsules betray its close relationship with our species of Euonymus.

Dick Smith