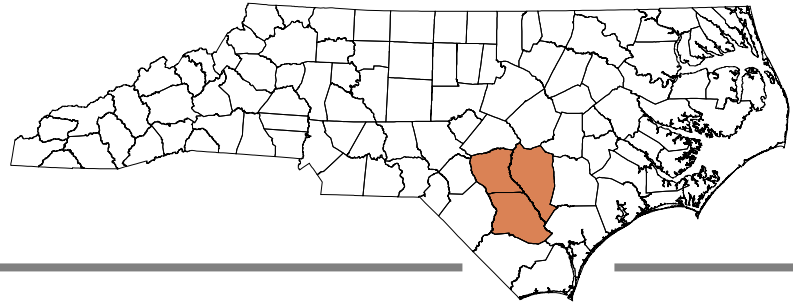

Pondberry

Lindera melissifolia

(Hairy spicebush, southern spicebush,
swamp spicebush)

Endangered (July 31, 1986)



Description: Pondberry is an aromatic, deciduous shrub with erect stems and shoots, growing as high as 6.5 ft (2 m). It spreads vegetatively by above ground shoots (stolons). Young stems and leaves are hairy. Leaves are alternate, drooping, and oblong, with hairy edges, a pointed tip and rounded base, 2-4 inches (5-10 cm) long and 0.6-1.4 inches (1.5-3.5 cm) wide. Small, pale, clustered flowers appear before leaves from February to April. Common spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) is taller, 6.5-16.4 ft (2-5 m) with leaves that do not droop, are tapered at the base, and smell like benzene when crushed. Pond spice (*Litsea aestivalis*) is taller with shorter, leathery leaves. Pondberry is characterized by the sassafras-like odor of its crushed leaves and tendency to form thickets of clonal, unbranched stems (100-10,000).

Life History: Flowers appear from February through April before leaf and shoot growth begins in late April. Fruiting occurs from August to September. The fruit matures in late autumn and is fleshy, oval, bright red, about 0.25-0.50 inch (6-10 mm) in diameter, but appears to have no reproductive value. Flowers are unisex and plants are mostly dioecious.

Habitat: Bottomland hardwood forests in inland areas, poorly drained swampy depressions, and edges of limestone sinks and ponds closer to the coast. Occurs at the edges of swamps and ponds and depressions in forests of longleaf pine and pond pine forests. Typically found in somewhat shaded areas, but can also grow in full sun.

Distribution: Southern coastal plain in Bladen*, Cumberland, and Sampson counties.

Threats: Endangered by degradation and destruction of plants and habitat by land clearing and drainage operations, timber harvesting and other forest management practices that eliminate forest canopy and change hydrology of the soil, encroachment by competitor species, and fungal disease that causes the plant to wilt.

Management Recommendations: Protection of existing populations and habitat by buffer zones around sites to protect the hydrology of the site as well as damage from road construction and management, clear cutting and other forest management practices.

* No record has been reported in this county in the past 20 years.

Sources: Jackson et al. 1992, Jordan et al. 1995, Radford et al. 1964, USFWS 1992a.

