

NATIVE SHRUBS ARE BACKBONE OF LANDSCAPES

Allspice, Spicebush, Bayberry, and Snowberry

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Native shrubs should provide the backbone for home and commercial landscapes. Four native shrubs which thrive when grown in full sun or light shade which provide a real diversity to the landscape include Carolina Allspice, Spicebush, Northern Bayberry, and Snowberry. These natives are relatively free of insect and disease problems, will grow in a wide range of soil conditions, and provide color and uniqueness at times when other shrubs are just background.

Carolina Allspice (*Calycanthus florida*) is native from Virginia to Florida but grows acceptably as far north as Boston and Central Michigan. It grows well in sun or shade but is usually slightly taller when grown in shady conditions. It is a dense round shrub, reaching 6 to 8 feet in height and 6 to 10 feet in width at maturity but in northern areas it seldom grows over 6 feet in height and width. *Calycanthus* can be transplanted easily during the

spring. It grows in a wide range of soil conditions, thriving in moist, well-drained loamy soils but adapts to well-drained, almost droughty conditions. It has darker green leaves during the summer months, becoming a pale yellow-green in the fall but does not develop effective fall color. The two-inch dark reddish-brown, star-like flowers appear sporadically from late May through June. This star shape is a unique aesthetic trait. Further, these flowers are very fragrant. The urn-shaped fruit (capsule-like at maturity) is not very effective. This shrub is outstanding in native plantings as specimens in the home landscape and mass plantings in large or commercial landscapes.

Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) is an outstanding shrub, 6 to 10 feet in height and width. It is native from Maine to Florida. *Lindera* is a native shrub which is effective in the home or commercial landscape, in naturalized plantings, specimen, or

used in small groupings. Spicebush thrives in full sun but is acceptable in partial sun. It is a good companion to pine or at the edge of a beech-maple-oak woods. It has been reported to be difficult to transplant because of the coarse roots but we have had 98% success when planting in moist, well-drained, sandy loam. During the spring the light green leaves are oblong, 3 to 5 inches in length. This lime-green foliage of summer is transformed into a rich yellow during fall. This fall color is spectacular. Spicebush flowers very early in the season (late April in Central Michigan). These thread-like flowers, borne in clusters near the terminal, are yellowish-green in color. The fruit which is scarlet and shaped somewhat like raspberries can be spectacular along with the fall foliar color. This native is underused and should be grown more in the trade. Lastly, the leaves and stems are fragrant, just one additional reason to consider culture of this outstanding plant.

Northern Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*) is native from Nova Scotia to Pennsylvania mostly along the coast. It is very salt-tolerant (chloide). Bayberry has a long history or association with the development of our country. It was used from colonial times to present in the making of highly aromatic candles (Bayberry candles). This semi-evergreen is perfectly hardy when planted in sandy, well-drained soils. Dirr reports it will exist in the clay soils of Central Illinois. It should be transplanted

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Carolina Allspice has reddish-brown flowers.



Spicebush is a good companion to pine or as an edge of woods.

balled and burlapped during early spring. Bayberry is an outstanding shrub when used in mass plantings associated with pine or broad-leaved evergreens as it has similar requirements. Myrica spreads from root suckers and if planted in full or partial sun will thrive. It will rapidly die out in 50% or more shade. The leaves are a rich dark green. They are oblong, 1½ to 4 inches in length. Bayberry flowers are not particularly effective but the grey fruit which literally lines the one-year old growth can be exciting during the fall. This fruit is usually profuse on one-year old growth. The foliage or branches, when crushed, are extremely fragrant. Although Bayberry has been reported to reach 5 to 12 feet in height and width, we usually find it rarely over 4 to 6 feet in height. Because Myrica spreads by root suckers, it tends to form large clumps and is most effective when used in mass plantings, be it for individual home landscapes or commercial landscapes.

Common Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) has been reported to be of little landscape value, but when noted in the fall with fruit, it is unique yet exciting. This naturalized plant was brought to this country during the late 1800's and can presently be found growing in the Canadian Maritime Provinces to Virginia and west to Minnesota. This dense shrub at maturity has a somewhat upright habit, reaching 3 to 5 feet in height and 2 to 4 feet in width. The leaves are opposite, somewhat honeysuckle in appearance, being a deep blue-green during the summer with no effective fall color. The perfect pink flowers are borne in terminal clusters during June. The white berry-drupe fruit are borne in clusters. They are interesting and afford an opportunity for one to truly enjoy the landscape. Snowberry can be planted in a wide range of soil conditions from sand to clay but prefers well-drained situations. Further, it is a good companion plant when planted at the edges of woods as it

prefers full to medium sun. This shrub when found as understory or a border plant in large area landscapes, commercial landscapes, parks, or home landscapes is exciting. Further, Snowberry has few or no catastrophic insect or disease problems.

The four above-mentioned native shrubs are underused in today's landscapes. They are particularly effective when used in naturalized plantings as specimen shrubs or in mass borders. They are usually most effectively grown in full or partial sun. They have no catastrophic insect and disease problems, are relatively easy to transplant, and will generally decrease maintenance requirements for most landscapes. They are not only exciting for their flower color or fruit but also Spicebush, Carolina Allspice, and Bayberry are exciting when the leaves and stems are crushed, giving off a unique fragrance. These plants truly stimulate all our sense while adding little to maintenance costs. **WTT**

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