

# Sweet-gale *Myrica gale*

## Description

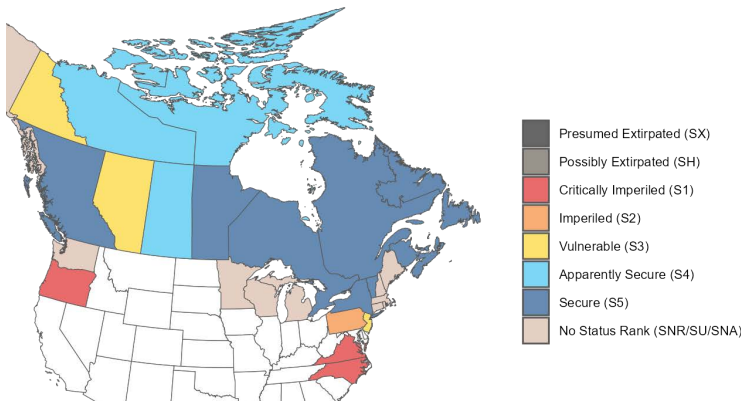
Sweet-gale is a deciduous shrub that may grow up to 3 feet (1 m) in height and emits a spicy fragrance if the branchlets are broken or the leaves are crushed. The branchlets may have enlarged flower buds near their tip, with the smaller leaf buds found farther down the branchlet. The leaves are alternately arranged, deciduous, thickish in texture, short-stalked, tend to be broadest at or near the tip, where several teeth are present on the margins, gradually tapering (and lacking teeth) to a narrower wedge-like base. The lower side (and sometimes the upper) of the leaves have scattered golden resin droplets. The brownish or greenish flowers, which appear in May before the leaves expand, are rather small and inconspicuous, being aggregated into compact male and female clusters, which occur on separate plants. The fruit is a dry nut about 1/8 inch (2-3 mm) in length that also has resin droplets on its surface.



Photo source: PNHP

## North American State/Province Conservation Status

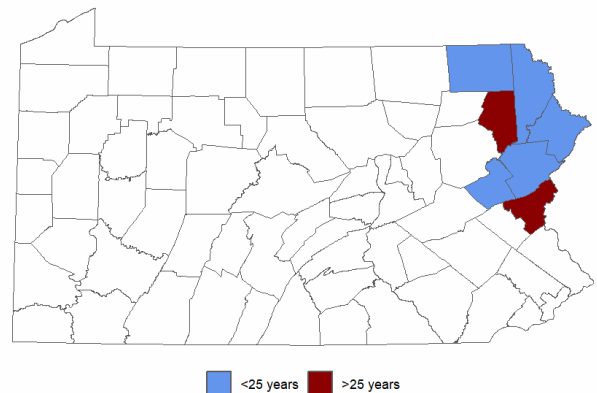
Map by NatureServe 2025



## Distribution & Habitat

Sweet-gale has a transcontinental range across the cooler regions of North America. In Pennsylvania, it represents a northerly species and has been documented historically in several northeastern counties. The species grows in boggy wetlands and along shorelines of lakes and streams.

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## Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Sweet-gale to be a species of special concern, based on the limited number of locations that have been recently confirmed and the wetland habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Threatened.

## Conservation Consideration

The viability of populations of Sweet-gale and its habitat may be enhanced by creating buffers and protecting the natural hydrology around wetlands.

## NatureServe conservation status ranks

**G5** – Globally secure; **S2** – Imperiled in Pennsylvania

## References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2025.
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

