# 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 that contrast 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 their tip, where several teeth are present on the margins, and then 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



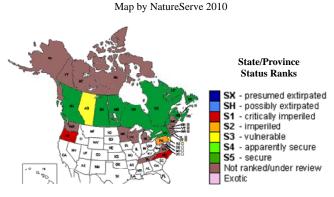
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clusters, which occur on separate plants. The fruit is a dry nut about 1/8 inch (2-3 mm) in length that also has resin droplets on its surface.

#### **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.

#### North American State/Province Conservation Status



## **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

## **Current State Status**

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Sweetgale 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.





#### References

- NatureServe. 2011. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <u>http://www.natureserve.org/explorer</u>.
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- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
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