

***Forestiera acuminata* (Michx.) Poir.**
OLEACEAE

swamp privet

Synonyms: *Adelia acuminata* Michx.
Borya acuminata (Michx.) Willd.



Drawing credit: USDA—Forest Service collection, Hunt Institute

General Description.—Swamp privet, also called eastern swamp privet, is a deciduous shrub or small, open-crowned tree, occasionally reaching 10 m in height but more often averaging 1.5 to 2.5 m (Krüssmann 1986, Johnson and Hoagland 1999). It is commonly multitrunked (Mackay and Finical 1999, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1997). The bark ranges from gray to dark brown in color and is either smooth or ridged (Johnson and Hoagland 1999, USGS 2002). Twigs are light brown, glabrous, and have conspicuous lenticels (Johnson and Hoagland 1999). Leaves are simple, opposite, and dull, yellowish green. They range in size from 3 to 11 cm in length, and 2.5 to 5 cm in width. Leaves have long, pointed tips (acuminate) and petioles that are slender and slightly winged at the base. While leaf margins are usually smooth, it is not uncommon for the apex half to be finely serrated.

Range.—Swamp privet is found in the wet woodlands and swamps of the Southeastern United States, from South Carolina south to Florida and westward into Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. It ranges as far north as Illinois, Indiana, and Missouri (Krüssmann 1986, USGS 2002).

Ecology.—Swamp privet grows primarily in wet areas, in swamps and bottomland forests, along streams, in wet woods and sloughs, and around ponds and lakes

(Johnson and Hoagland 1999, USGS 2002). It will grow in either full or partial sun and is highly adaptable to various soils (MacKay and Finical 1999). The species reportedly thrives in a variety of soil types, sand, loam or clay, and at pH's ranging from acidic to basic. Swamp privet does, however, require that the soils be moist (Plants for a Future 2001). It frequently produces new stems from the base of senescing individuals, especially when soils are flooded (Mackay and Finical 1999, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1997).

Reproduction.—Swamp privet plants are monoecious; flowers emerge in the spring before the leaves unfold. They are yellow, fragrant and small, the males sessile or almost so, female flowers in small panicles or fascicles (Bailey and Bailey 1976, Botanical Institute 2002, Johnson and Hoagland 1999, Krüssmann 1986). They have no petals and minute or absent sepals. Male flowers have one to four stamens, female flowers have simple or two-lobed stigmas (Johnson and Hoagland 1999, Botanical Institute 2002, USGS 2002). Fruits are dark purple or black oblong drupes, 8 to 12 mm long with one, rarely two, seeds. They appear in summer and are promptly shed (Johnson and Hoagland 1999). Although no data are provided to support this, the Plants for a Future website (2001) suggests that seeds be sown as soon as they ripen and that cuttings can be taken of half-ripe wood in summer or mature wood in winter.

Growth and Management.—Swamp privet, while adaptable to many soil types, must be located in moist areas. It is moderately tolerant of heat and can tolerate full or partial sunlight (Mackay and Finical 1999). It has been reported in cultivation (Krüssmann 1986).

Benefits.—The fruits of swamp privet are considered good food for wildlife (Johnson and Hoagland 1999). A decoction of the roots and bark has been used as a health beverage, and the wood has been used for turning (Bailey and Bailey 1976), although reports on its durability vary (Plants for a Future 2001).

References

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