

PLANTS OF PARKER RIVER N.W.R

Presented by the Friends
Issue #7

Small Bayberry

(*Morella caroliniensis*)

Myricaceae family. This shrub is native to the eastern United States. It can be found growing in dense groups throughout the island, especially in the back and interdunes. This woody, multi-stemmed, semi-evergreen produces waxy, oblong leaves (1 - 4") and aromatic berries that may remain on the plant until spring. Over 80 species of birds including Yellow-rumped Warblers, Tree Swallows, and Gray Catbirds feast on its berries. Traditionally, the waxy coating and bay-like fragrance of its berries were used in soap and candle making. Look for Small Bayberry plants growing along the refuge road and at the Pines Trail.



Beach Plum

(*Prunus maritima*)

Rose family. This native, densely branching shrub has reddish-brown bark and oval leaves that drop in the winter. It's found throughout the island and is easily identified by its edible and fleshy fruit that ripen from August through mid-September (3/4"). People enjoy making jams and jellies from the Beach Plums slightly bitter berries. In the fall, one can apply for a berry picking permit at refuge headquarters. Look for Beach Plums along the Pines Trail.



Beach Rose/Rugosa Rose

(*Rosa rugosa*)

Rose family. This non-native shrub was introduced into North America from Asia in the 1770's. It's commonly called the "Wrinkled Rose" due to its rough, leathery, dark green leaves. Masses of pink or white flowers appear in mid-summer borne on spiny heavy stems. The fruits (rose hips) are high in vitamin C and used for medicinal purposes, while the flower petals can be steeped for tea. Common throughout the island, this shrub is an important stabilizer for the beach and dunes. A good place to look for Beach Rose is at Parking Lots #6 and #7



Climbing Bittersweet (*Celastrus sp.*)

Note: *I have never seen this plant on the island. I believe the very common bittersweet is *Celastrus orbiculatus* – Asian Bittersweet. I think it would be better to cite Asian Bittersweet.*

Staff-tree family (Celastraceae). Listed on the Endangered Species List as it is being rapidly replaced in the northeast by the more aggressive and prohibitive Asiatic bittersweet. Small green flowers in terminal clusters appear in the spring (May-June) on its turning, woody vine often reaching 30 feet. The yellow-orange fruits open upon maturing to expose a scarlet berry-like interior (fleshy seeds). Indigenous peoples utilized the fruit and bark for food and medicinal purposes. The bark, though, is considered a starvation food. Birds feast on the seeds in the late winter months and use the vines for shelter. Climbing bittersweet is commonly found on grape island.



Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)

Rose family. Black Cherry is a native, deciduous medium to large tree (often reaches 60 feet) dominating the forest of scrub and shrub thickets on the back dune ridge. White flowers appear in the late spring (March-June) and fleshy, red to purple fruit ripens by late summer. The bark of young trees is ridged and smooth, while the bark of older trees is dark and scaly. Black Cherry wood is prized for crafting fine woodworking, flavoring rum and brandy, and its cherries are a source of food for birds. The Cherokee and Iroquois used its inner bark to treat coughs, fevers, and lung ailments. Look for Black Cherry along the Hellcat boardwalk and along the Pines Trail.



Thank you for enjoying our 7th installment of Wildflowers and Plants of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge. If you enjoyed this but have not seen the previous issues please find all archived articles from our website under the archived events tab on our home page or by navigating via this link <https://parkerriver.org/archived-articles/>

