Native Plant of the Month

Sweet Gale

*Myrica gale*

- This wetland and bog-loving plant has sweet scented foliage.
- Sweet gale is important ecologically as it fixes nitrogen in the soil, nourishing other plants that follow in the natural succession.
- There are several species of native *Myrica* species in North America. Their fruits provide winter food for birds.
- The waxy fruits of *Myrica* have been used as a form of wax for centuries.
- Its local native name “monkey bush” implies that “Sasquatch” also used this plant in some way.

Landscape Value

Sweet gale is not a common ornamental. However, this low, deciduous shrub, with aromatic foliage and yellow flower clusters in spring, is a choice addition to a wetland bog landscape. Bogs and fens were once a common occurrence in our region. They are noted for their highly acidic soil and rich humus content, primarily from sedge or peat moss accumulating over centuries. Bogs can be created in landscapes for interest (refer to pond-building literature).

Companion plants could include Labrador tea, bog rosemary, douglas spirea, sundew, cotton grass, shooting star, bog asphodel, many sedges, and mosses.

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