Native Plant of the Month

Western Bog-Laurel
*Kalmia microphylla var. occidentalis*

- This is a plant of our bogs and fens, tolerating even the high acid soils of our peat bogs. The leaves are aromatic and similar in shape to true laurel (or bay) leaves. This provides its common name.
- Bog laurel contains unique compounds which lead to its use by native people for certain kinds of medicine.
- Uncommon in our region because of its specific soil and hydrology requirements, it can be found naturalized in forested lands with bogs and fens, which are dotted with its rose-purple flowers in spring.

Landscape Value

A small evergreen shrub with showy rose-purple flowers, bog-laurel is worth making room for in a wet bog garden along with Labrador tea, fool's huckleberry, cotton grass, sundew, and other extraordinary native bog plants.

It is possible to create a bog in your landscape by placing a pond liner a foot or so below the soil line to collect and hold water, and filling with a low pH humus and rich soil.* Boggs are typically in open sunny areas surrounded by forest so consider placing your bog along the sunny edge of a forest or near small trees.

*See pond building literature to learn more.

*Text by Heidi Bohan
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