

## Southern Waxmyrtle (*Myrica cerifera*)

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### Summary:

Foliage: Deciduous broadleaf

Height: 15 feet

Spread: 15 feet

Shape: Upright, multi-stem

Southern waxmyrtle is a large evergreen shrub or small tree depending on how one prunes it. This species tolerates wet and dry soils and females have a somewhat showy display of gray berries in the fall/winter.

### Plant Needs:

Zone: 7 (6b) to 11

Light: Partial shade to full sun

Moisture: Moist to dry

Soil Type: Sandy, loam, or clay

pH Range: 3.7 to 6.5

### Functions:

Suggested uses for this plant include border, massing, foundation, and screen.

### Planting Notes:

Plant both male and female plants for berries.

Extremely adaptable. Thrives in poor sandy or heavy clay soils. Will generally produce more fruit when grown in poor soil. Salt tolerant.

### Care:

Easy to maintain.

Test soil and adjust soil pH if it is too high.

### Problems:

No serious pests.

Iron chlorosis is a problem in high pH soils.

### Alternatives:

Consult local garden centers, historic or public gardens and arboreta regarding cultivars and related species that grow well in your area.

Related species:

Northern bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*) is a large shrub with a similar culture to southern waxmyrtle but differs in its hardiness zone range which is zone 3 to 6. The fruit display is showier on northern bayberry compared to southern waxmyrtle. Both species fix nitrogen which means that bacteria that reside on roots can convert atmospheric (gaseous) nitrogen into a fertilizer form that plants can use. Both species will sucker and spread throughout a growing bed (especially northern bayberry). In terms of soil stabilization, this is an advantage. In terms of a garden bed, this may be a disadvantage.

### Comments:

In addition to the salt, wet and dry soil tolerance, bayberries are grown for their aromatic leaves and its waxy, gray berries.

Because of their fragrance, the fruit were historically used in making barberry-scented candles.

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