

WACD PLANT MATERIALS CENTER

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Sweet Gale (*Myrica gale*)

Distribution

Throughout North America

Growth Habit

Sweet gale has grey-brown stems that grow to 4 feet with a 2-3 foot spread depending on growing conditions. Lance shaped leaves are spotted with bright yellow wax-glands. Greenish-yellow catkins are borne on separate male (2cm long) and female (1cm long) plants.

Adaptability

Sweet gale is a nitrogen fixing deciduous plant that grows great in low nitrogen, high acidic soils, often camouflaged or growing adjacent to Douglas spiraea (*Spiraea douglasii*). Sweet gale thrives best in wetlands or bogs at low elevations. It can be found on upper fringes of salt marshes after washing down into the estuary establishing itself nicely in narrow bands at the intertidal zone.

Comments

- Nice fragrant foliage used as a natural insect repellent.
- Native cultures used it for stomach aches, fever, bronchial ailments and liver problems.
- In the middle ages it was used as a flavor when brewing beer before hops was discovered.
- Sweet gale in an estuary setting provides refuge for juvenile salmon.

