



# MT. LEBANON NATURE CONSERVANCY

## April - A Native Plant for Your Garden

### Common Spicebush - *Lindera benzoin*

A walk in the woods last week brought a smile to my face. Spicebush is beginning to bloom.



Whenever faced with a partially shaded garden with decent soils, Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) is always one of the first native shrubs I recommend. It has long been one of my favorites with its early spring yellow flowers, red fruit and clear yellow fall color.

Spicebush is a multi-stemmed shrub that grows between 5 and 15 feet tall in a somewhat rounded form. It is a dioecious plant, with male and female flowers on separate plants; to produce fruit both male and female plants are needed.

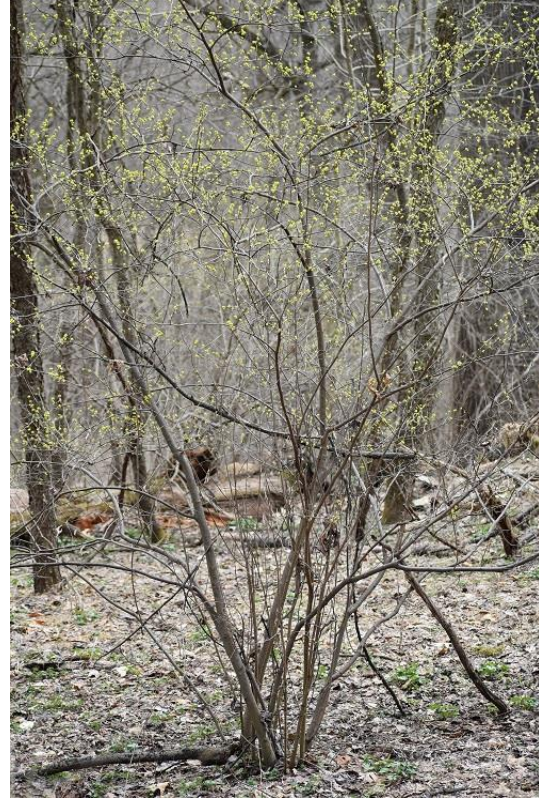
The flowers are fragrant, and all parts of the plant including the leaves release a spicy scent when crushed. This aromatic character helps deter hungry deer. Crushing a leaf or scratching a small stem and smelling it for its telltale fragrance is an easy way to identify this plant.



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Small clusters of flowers cover this shrub along the branches before leaf out, much like the more familiar redbud. While flowers of male plants are felt to be showier, it is the female that produces the bright red drupes in the fall. These are attractive to more than a dozen songbirds. I remember sitting outside one fall and watching a crowd of Cedar Waxwings make repeated trips to a group of Spicebush until the fruit was all but gone. One big reason to try to include Spicebush in your garden – where it adapts nicely – is that this species is a host plant to the caterpillars of the Spicebush and Eastern Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly as well as the striking Prometheus Moth which eat the leaves. The flowers are pollinated by various small bees and flies.

Here in Southwestern Pennsylvania Spicebush is typically found in rich deciduous woodlands often with exposed limestone. Spicebush is a lovely spring addition to any shade garden. Scatter several around the yard or in a cluster a couple to better ensure that you get male and female plants. And get out and enjoy their wonderful delicate beauty. Now's the time!



For more information visit [Wildflowers of Western Pennsylvania](http://Wildflowers of Western Pennsylvania).

