

Clethra alnifolia

Sweet Pepperbush, Summersweet

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic



Summer sweet and spicy is the pleasant fragrance of this pollinator magnet that naturalizes readily in shady, damp places as well as coastal landscapes. Although not native to NoVA (it is common in the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain), it grows well in cultivation here. The Virginia Native Plant Society honored Sweet Pepperbush as Wildflower of the Year in 2015.

Shrub	Shrub Border, with Pollinator,* Fruit Capsules	
Height: 6–12 feet		
Spread: 3–6 feet		
Bloom Color: White (pink cultivars)		
Characteristics		
Upright to rounded, twiggy deciduous shrub		
Quilted, medium green to dark green foliage		
Intensely scented, creamy white flowers (resemble Buddleia) bloom July and August on new growth		
Green to brown elongated spikes of dry capsules from September to January		
Yellow autumn foliage		
Brown to taupe bark, exfoliating with age		
Often suckers to form broad colonies		
Attributes		
Tolerates clay soil, dense shade (where it will flower), and salt (moderate); no serious pests or diseases; deer seldom severely damage		
Excellent for attracting native bees, hummingbirds, & butterflies; birds & small mammals eat the fruit		
Growing and Maintenance Tips		Excellent Replacement for
Soil Requirements: Average		<i>Buddleia davidii</i> and hybrids - Butterfly Bush
Light Requirements: Sun, Partial Shade, Shade		<i>Lythrum salicaria</i> - Purple Loosestrife
Water Requirements: Moist, Wet		<i>Rosa</i> species - Roses
Grows in full sun, but prefers dappled shade		<i>Spiraea japonica</i> - Japanese Spirea
To contain spread, remove root suckers as they appear; any pruning should occur in late winter		<i>Viburnum lantana</i> - Wayfaring Tree
Use in borders, near foundations, in butterfly, hummer, or rain gardens, or to control erosion	<i>Vitex agnus-castus</i> - Chaste Tree	
Hardiness: USDA Zones 3–9	*A bumble bee sips nectar from a flower.	

developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria

Images by Elaine Mills, Meadowlark Botanical Gardens and U.S. National Arboretum and by Mary Free (middle), Central Library Garden



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