

## Ceanothus americanus (New Jersey Tea)

New Jersey Tea (*Ceanothus americanus*, aka Mountain Snowbell) is a deciduous shrub native to all areas of North Carolina. Its native habitat is open, deciduous woods; woodland edges; oak savannas; and meadows. It was selected as the 2013 North Carolina Wildflower of the Year, a program managed by the North Carolina Botanical Garden with some financial support from the Garden Club of North Carolina. Native Americans used it as a tea to treat respiratory tract infections.

From May to June it is covered with fragrant, long-lasting, 2- to 5-in. long panicles of cup-shaped creamy white flowers. The flowers' nectar makes the plant highly attractive to hummingbirds, butterflies, bees, moths, predatory wasps and other insects. It displays black, brown/copper, green, or red/burgundy fruit from June to July. Songbirds eat its seeds.

This heat-tolerant multi-stemmed shrub is low growing and low maintenance, and it is drought-tolerant once established. With a medium growth rate and a rounded crown, it typically grows to 2- to 3-ft. tall and 3- to 5-ft. wide.

Use this shrub in foundations, as a specimen, in



Flower close up  
Joshua Mayer  
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shrub borders and native plantings, or in groupings. Thick, woody, red roots go deep and help the plant withstand droughty conditions and make it great for erosion control on slopes, but they also make established shrubs difficult to transplant.

New Jersey Tea grows best in well-drained sandy loam or rocky soils in full sun (6 or more hours of direct sunlight a day) to partial shade (direct sunlight for 2 to 6 hours).

It has no serious insect or disease problems, but it is susceptible to leaf spot and powdery mildew. In wet soils it is prone to root rot.



Flowers (Buncombe County, NC)

Randy Harter

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For more information on gardening in Brunswick County, please call the Brunswick County Cooperative Extension Office, 910.253.2610.

### SOURCES:

[Ceanothus americanus \(Mountain Snowbell, New Jersey Tea\) | North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox \(ncsu.edu\)](https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=245521#:~:text=Ceanothus%20americanus%2C%20commonly%20called%20New%20Jersey%20tea%2C%20is,open%20woods%20and%20thickets%20throughout%20the%20state%20%28Steyermark%29.)

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