

Itea virginica (Itea, Virginia Sweetspire, Virginia Willow)

Virginia Sweetspire is a native, deciduous-to-semi-evergreen shrub found in the southeast US on stream-banks and wet pine barrens. It can grow up to 8-ft. tall and has graceful arching branches. In early summer, small, fragrant, star-shaped white flowers occur in terminal arching racemes 2- to 6-in. long. Fall color is red to purple and lasts

used for erosion control in wet areas or on wet banks.

The cultivar 'Henry's Garnet' is easiest to find for sale. Another option is 'Little Henry,' a dwarf with arching form that grows 3- to 5-ft. tall.

Sweetspire transplants easily from containers. It is an excellent substitute for burning bush. Mass plantings are usually more attractive than individual plants.

Home gardeners can easily propagate Sweetspire by cuttings or division. Cuttings need about 4 weeks to root and do so with or without rooting hormone. Root in a mix of three parts perlite and one part peat and kept media moist but not wet. Cuttings can be taken from May to September. Divisions of suckers can be done most easily in fall.



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well into winter. Flowers attract butterflies and hummingbirds. Songbirds eat the seeds.

Although Virginia Sweetspire prefers moist, rich, slightly acidic, humusy soils in dappled sunlight (shade through the upper canopy all day) or partial shade (direct sunlight only part of the day, 2 to 6 hours), it tolerates a wide range of soil conditions and pHs. Best flowering occurs with 4 hours of sun per day. Avoid over-fertilization.

This plant has a medium growth rate and blooms on the previous season's wood, so prune after flowering.

Itea virginica resists drought (if given plenty of water during its first year, while becoming established), fire, and wet soil, and it moderately resists deer. It has no significant pests or diseases. It can form dense colonies by root suckering (which makes it potentially weedy) and can be



Flowers close up Eleanor CC BY-NC 2.0

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

SOURCES:

Itea virginica (Itea, Virginia Sweetspire, Virginia Sweet Spire, Virginia Willow) | North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox (ncsu.edu)

<https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/virginia-sweetspire/>