Common Name: CORKWOOD

Scientific Name: *Leitneria floridana* Chapman

Other Commonly Used Names: none

Previously Used Scientific Names: *Myrica floridana* (Chapman) A.W. Wood

Family: Leitneriaceae (corkwood) or Simaroubaceae (quassia)

Rarity Ranks: G3/S1

State Legal Status: Threatened

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: OBL

Description: Deciduous **shrub or small tree** occurring in colonies. **Stem** up to 20 feet (6 meters) tall, solitary, unbranched, reddish with small corky patches (**lenticels**) and conspicuous leaf scars. **Leaves** 2 - 6¾ inches (5 - 17 cm) long and ¾ - 2 inches (2 - 5) wide, alternate, with entire margins, clustered and often drooping at the top of the stem; mature leaves are hairless above and hairy beneath, with wrinkled, veiny surfaces. **Leaf stalks** ¾ - 1½ inches (2 - 4 cm) long. **Flowers** very small, borne in erect catkins on last year's wood before leaves emerge; **male and female flowers** usually on separate plants. **Female catkins** ⅜ - ¾ inch (1 - 2 cm) long, dark red; **male catkins** ¾ - 2 inches (2 - 5 cm) long, yellow-brown. **Fruits** up to 1 inch (1 - 2.5 cm) long, leathery, one-seeded, flat on one side and rounded on the other, yellow turning to brown, in clusters.

Similar Species: Unbranched saplings of swamp bay (*Persea palustris*) and tupelo (*Nyssa ogechee*, *N. aquatica*) may resemble corkwood but lack the wrinkled, veiny leaf surfaces. Swamp bay leaves are spicy smelling.

Related Rare Species: Corkwood is the only species in its genus and the only genus in the family Leitneriaceae, although some botanists place corkwood in the large, tropical family, Simaroubaceae (the quassia family).

Habitat: Freshwater or tidal swamps and marshes, especially sawgrass-cabbage palm marshes; river floodplains and levees.

Life History: Corkwood spreads primarily by producing buds on shallow roots, often forming large colonies of genetically identical clones. Corkwood is usually dioecious – its male and female flowers are on separate plants – and pollen is dispersed by wind. Because of habitat fragmentation, female and male colonies may become widely separated, thus reducing the chance of sexual reproduction. When fruits are produced, they are probably dispersed by animals. The wood of this shrub is lighter than cork, with a specific gravity of 0.21 (balsa wood has a specific gravity of 0.12); it has been used for fishnet floats and bottle stoppers.

Survey Recommendations: Plants flower February–March, but are identifiable all year by fruits, corky bark, leaf scars, and overall wandlike appearance.

Range: South Georgia, north Florida, east Texas, east Arkansas, and southeast Missouri. The pollen record indicates that corkwood was once widespread throughout the southeastern U.S. but has persisted in only these few, widely scattered areas.

Threats: Ditching, draining, and filling wetlands; alteration of hydrology in streams and rivers.

Georgia Conservation Status: Three populations are currently known, all on conservation lands. The population in Dougherty County has not been seen in more than 80 years.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Protect wetlands from ditching, draining, clearing, and logging. Protect floodplains from changes in stream flow and flooding regimes.

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L. Chafin, Sept. 2007: original account
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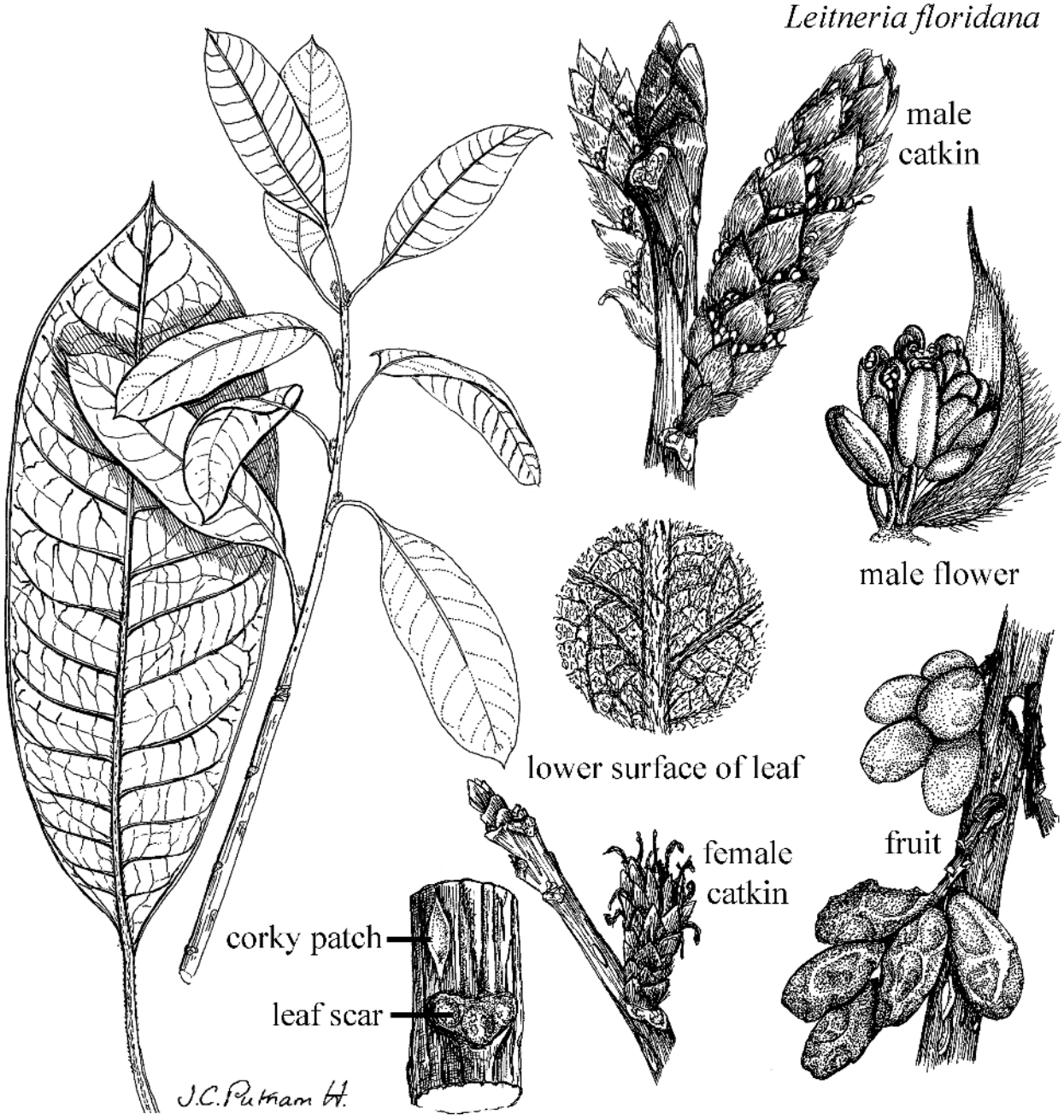
CORKWOOD

Leitneria floridana



Fruit

Female catkin