Common Name: SAND MYRTLE

Scientific Name: *Leiophyllum buxifolium* (Bergius) Elliott

Other Commonly Used Names: none

Previously Used Scientific Names: *Kalmia buxifolia* (Bergius) Gift, Kron & Stevens, *Dendrium buxifolium* (Bergius) Desvaux

Family: Ericaceae (heath)

Rarity Ranks: G4/S1

State Legal Status: Threatened

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: FACU

Description: Shrub usually less than 3 feet (1 meter) tall, erect or spreading, forming dense clumps or mats. **Leaves** up to 1 inch (2.5 cm) long and ¼ inch (0.8 cm) wide, alternate or opposite, oval with inrolled margins and very short leaf stalks; evergreen (shiny and dark green in summer, bronze in winter). **Flowers** about ⅜ inch (1 cm) wide, in dense clusters, with 5 white

or pinkish petals and 10 showy, pink-tipped stamens. **Fruit** a capsule, about ⅛ inch (0.3 - 0.4 cm) long, pointed, 3-parted.

Similar Species: Sand myrtle occurs at mountain sites with other heath species such as blueberry (*Vaccinium* spp.) and huckleberry (*Gaylussacia* spp.); these deciduous shrubs have bell-shaped or urn-shaped flowers. St. Andrew's-cross (*Hypericum stragulum*) has opposite, deciduous leaves and also may occur with sand myrtle. At Coastal Plain sites in North and South Carolina (but not Georgia, where sand myrtle occurs only in the mountains), sand myrtle may occur with low, evergreen blueberries (e.g. *Vaccinium myrsinites* and *V. crassifolium*).

Related Rare Species: Some botanists think sand myrtle belongs in the mountain laurel genus (*Kalmia*) and is therefore a close relative of Carolina bog laurel (*Kalmia carolina*), included on this website.

Habitat: In Georgia, high-elevation mountain rock outcrops and ledges.

Life History: Sand myrtle reproduces sexually as well as vegetatively by producing adventitious roots at nodes on its low, spreading branches. Its flowers are pollinated by small bees, honeybees, and flies. Its seeds are small and lack features such as elaiosomes that might attract insects and are, therefore, probably dispersed by gravity.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering (April–May) and fruiting (September–October), but the evergreen leaves and growth form are distinctive all year.

Range: Mountains of Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Sand myrtle also occurs in sandy, acidic soils of the Coastal Plain in North Carolina, South Carolina, and New Jersey.

Threats: Clearing, off-road-vehicle use, and excessive foot traffic.

Georgia Conservation Status: Known from 2 sites, both in the Chattahoochee National Forest; one is at great risk of destruction.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Avoid clearing or other mechanical disturbances. Protect plants from trampling and off-road vehicle traffic.

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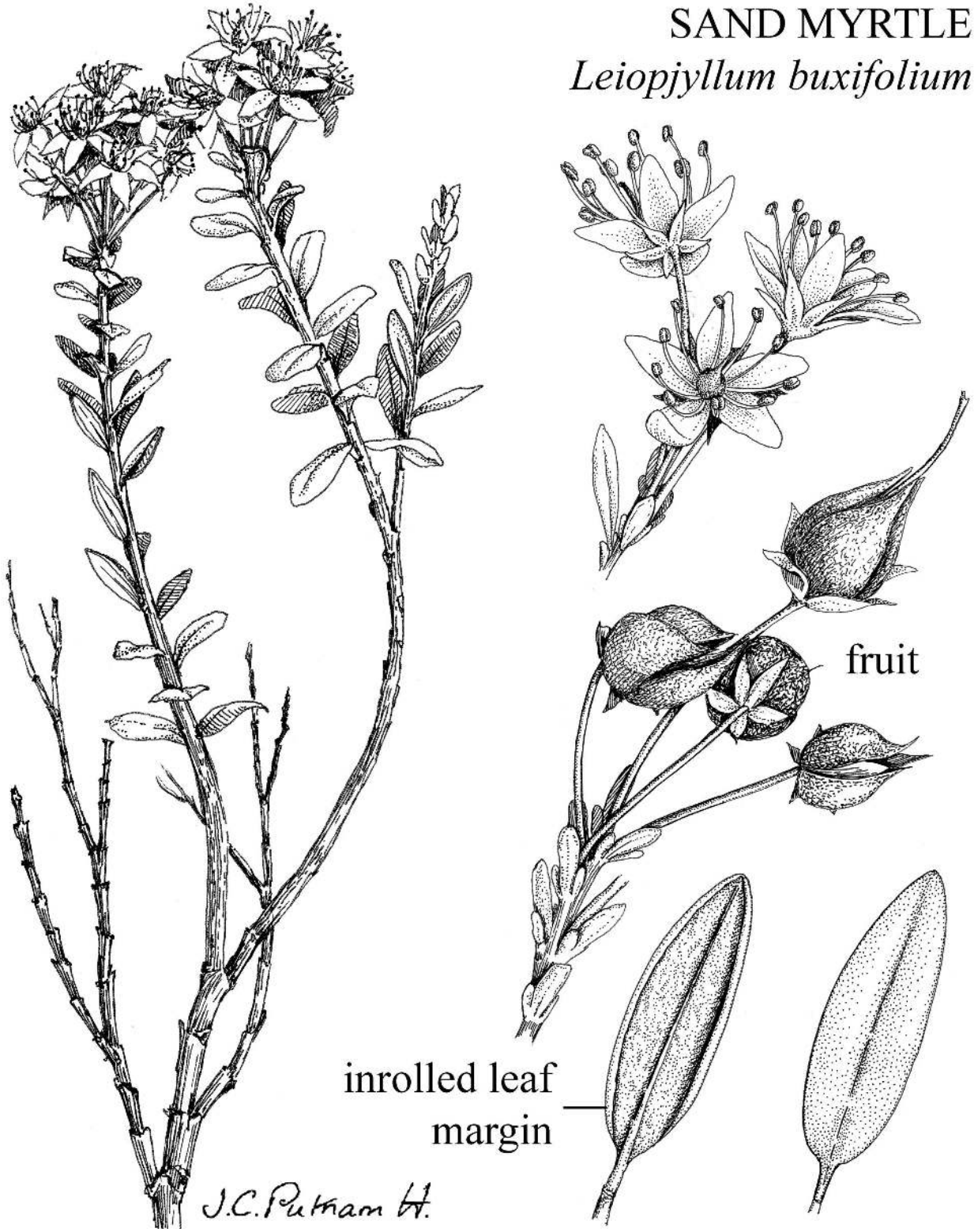
L. Chafin, Apr. 2007: original account
K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures

SAND MYRTLE

Leiopjyllum buxifolium

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