



Common Name: ODORLESS BAYBERRY

Scientific Name: *Morella inodora* (W. Bartram) Small

Other Commonly Used Names: odorless wax-myrtle, odorless waxberry, candleberry

Previously Used Scientific Names: *Myrica inodora* W. Bartram, *Cerothamnus inodorus* (Bartram) Small

Family: Myricaceae (bayberry)

Rarity Ranks: G4/S2?

State Legal Status: Threatened

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: OBL

Description: Evergreen **shrub** to about 23 feet (7 meters) tall, usually much shorter, with smooth, hairless twigs. **Leaves** up to 4½ inches (3.5 - 11.8 cm) long and 1¾ inches (1.4 - 4.4 cm) wide, dark green, oval with blunt or rounded tips and tapering bases; alternate, thick and

leathery, edges with few or no teeth and slightly rolled under, both surfaces dotted with clear or white glands, odorless when crushed. **Female and male flowers** on separate plants, very small and tightly packed into rounded clusters. **Fruit** about ¼ inch (4 - 8 mm) wide, oval, blue-black, warty with white wax between the bumps, on conspicuous stalks.

Similar Species: Other bayberry species in Georgia's Coastal Plain (*Morella cerifera* and *M. heterophylla*) have amber gland dots on the lower surface of the leaves, which exude a spicy smell when crushed; their fruits are round and waxy, and clustered tightly along the stems. Dahoon (*Ilex cassine*) has leathery, bristle-tipped leaves and red berries. Wild olive (*Osmanthus americanus*) leaves are leathery but opposite with pointed tips.

Related Rare Species: Sweet-fern (*Comptonia peregrina*, Special Concern) forms colonies of shrubs to 5 feet tall (1.5 meters) in disturbed areas and open, upland forests in Rabun and White Counties. Its spicy-smelling leaves are up to 6 inches (15 cm) long and ¾ inch (1.8 cm) wide, with scalloped edges cut almost to the midvein. Its male-flowered catkins are cylindrical in shape, the female-flowered catkins are round.

Habitat: Bayheads, titi swamps, moist to wet pinelands; often with pond pine, titi, buckwheat tree, fetterbush, and swamp azalea.

Life History: Odorless bayberry is dioecious – female and male flowers are on separate plants. Bayberry flowers are wind-pollinated. The fruits are eaten and dispersed by birds who benefit from the fat-rich, waxy coating on the berries. The roots of bayberries and wax myrtles have nodules containing nitrogen-fixing bacteria which convert atmospheric nitrogen to a form of nitrogen that plants can use, allowing these plants to grow in the usually nitrogen-poor soils of wetlands.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering (late winter–early spring) and fruiting (summer–fall), although plants can usually be identified all year by their leaves.

Range: Coastal Plain of Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

Threats: Fire suppression. Ditching and draining in wetlands. Rooting by feral hogs. Conversion of habitat to pine plantations and development.

Georgia Conservation Status: One population, in a state-protected natural area in Colquitt County, is currently known. Three other populations have not been seen in more than 35 years.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Apply prescribed fire every 2 - 3 years, primarily during the growing season; plants will vigorously re-sprout. Avoid placing firebeaks in wetlands. Avoid ditching, draining, and clearcutting in wetlands. Eradicate feral hogs.

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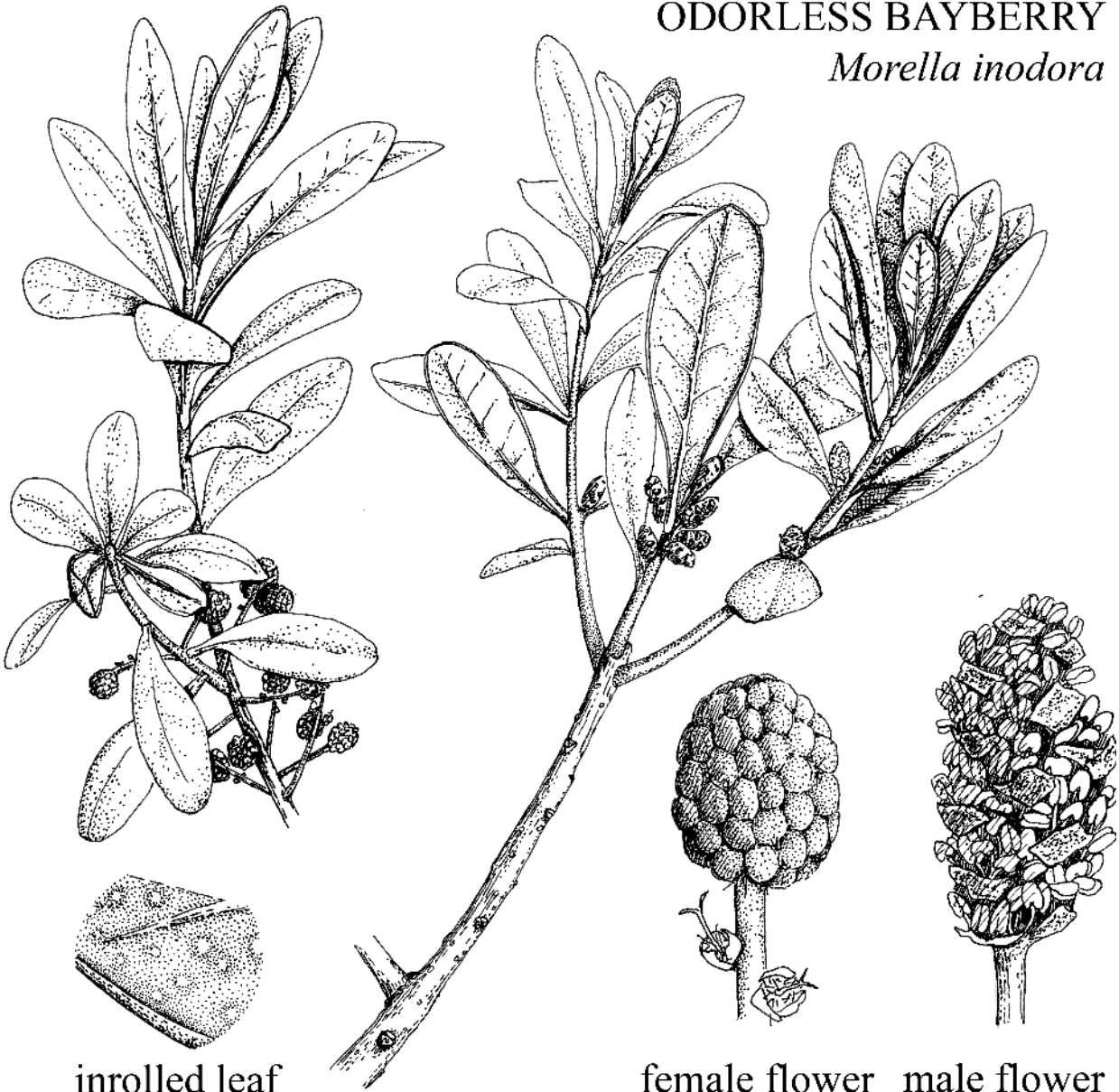
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L. Chafin, June 2008: original account

K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures

ODORLESS BAYBERRY

Morella inodora



inrolled leaf
margin

J.C. Putnam H.

female flower
cluster

male flower
cluster