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Spicebush

Lindera benzoin L.

Spicebush is a shrub native to the eastern United States. All parts of the shrub are highly aromatic. The leaves and twigs have often used in teas, and the berries as a spice. Spicebush flowers with many small yellow flowers in early spring. The species is dioecious, meaning that male and female flowers are on different plants; the flowers are followed, in the fall, by red drupes on the female plants which attract birds. Fall color is a clear yellow. The larvae of the spicebush swallowtail butterfly and of the promethea silkmoth feed on this plant.

Spicebush is not highly drought-tolerant, but it is very deer-resistant in nature and is remarkably free of pests and diseases. It may grow up to 12 feet tall, but 6-8 feet is more common. It is hardy through zone 4.

Cultivation

Spicebush is very shade-tolerant, although it also likes full sun. It is very easy to grow in moist to moderate soils, including those of most garden beds.

Propagation

Time is important in sowing spicebush seeds as they lose viability fairly rapidly after being picked. They need a full winter's cold-stratification (in a moist medium at or below 41 degrees fahrenheit, for at least three months), and do best when this is preceded by warm stratification (which is accomplished by planting the seed immediately). If planted seed does not sprout the following spring, hold the medium one more year to be sure.



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