

# Bird Friendly Native Plant of the Month

MAY 2015

NC NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

REEDY CREEK NATURE PRESERVE



Common yellowthroat



Photos by Will Stuart

## *Itea virginica* Virginia sweetspire

### Virginia sweetspire-- excellent shrub with many uses

Virginia sweetspire is generally easy to grow and serves as a semi-evergreen groundcover. When considering this addition to your landscape consider:

- Sun (for best flower show) but it can tolerate shade
- Spreading shrub, 3-5' tall, colonizes
- Flowers are white 4" spires appearing in late spring
- Attracts butterflies
- Fall color red, purple, or yellow
- Soil conditions--common in wet, moist, soil, but will tolerate drier locations



- Landscape uses as a hedge, mixed border, massing or bank stabilization

Because it is native to creeks, swamps or pondsides, this is a prime shrub for lower or wet places in the landscape, providing erosion control around streams. It is even at home in standing water, providing shelter for birds in the area. Ecologically, sweetspire provides pollen for native bees, nectar for butterflies and food for caterpillars.

Selections include 'Henry's Garnet,' 'Merlot,' 'Saturnalia' and Little Henry, which is more compact.

Companion plants--bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), coastal doghobble (*Leucothoe axillaris*),

wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), inkberry holly (*Ilex glabra*) and titi (*Cyrilla racemiflora*).

***Itea virginica*** is a good source of nectar and cover for wildlife and makes an excellent substitute for nandina a commonly planted invasive exotic species

### Find out More!

Bird Friendly Native Plant of the Month is a joint effort of the NC Native Plant Society ([ncwildflower.org](http://ncwildflower.org)) and the NC Audubon Society ([ncaudubonblog.org](http://ncaudubonblog.org))

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Visit [ncwildflower.org](http://ncwildflower.org) to join and learn more about the benefits of adding native plants to your landscape.

