

## Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

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### Maine Natural Areas Program



## *Lindera benzoin* (L.) Blume

### Spicebush

- [State Rank](#): S3
- [Global Rank](#): G5
- [State Status](#): Special Concern

**Habitat:** Damp woods and brooksides. [Forested wetland]

**Range:** Florida to Texas, north to southern Maine and west to southern Michigan.

Fairly widely distributed in York County but virtually absent elsewhere in the state. Not listed as rare in other New England states.



**Aids to Identification:** This southern shrub is best distinguished by the spicy scent of the leaves and twigs. No other Maine shrub has the combination of spicy scent and leaves that are entire (not toothed or lobed), egg-shaped, and deciduous. Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), which is also rare in Maine and which is also strong-scented, can have entire leaves but usually has at least some leaves that are lobed. The flowers are followed by bright red drupes.

**Ecological characteristics:** Found along brooks, in basin swamps, and in floodplains in southern Maine as a forest understory shrub. Common associates include red maple, white pine, hemlock, highbush blueberry, sensitive fern, and horsetails.



**Phenology:** Flowers from late April to May.

**Family:** Lauraceae

**Synonyms:** *Benzoin aestivale* (L.) Nees; *Lindera benzoin* (L.) Blume var. *pubescens* (Palmer & Steyermark) Rehd.

**Known Distribution in Maine:** This rare plant has been documented from a total of 12 town(s) in the following county(ies): Cumberland, York.



**Reason(s) for rarity:** At northern limit of range; sometimes winter killed. Some habitats in southern Maine have been converted to other uses.

**Conservation considerations:** This plant is restricted statewide to extreme southern Maine. Populations are vulnerable (and some have apparently succumbed) to conversion of their habitat to residential or commercial use.

#### **Credits**

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