

# Sweet Pepperbush

*Clethra alnifolia*



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## Species Description

Sweet Pepperbush is a woody shrub that can grow to a height of 2 m, and is often found in dense thickets. It has shiny, alternate, serrated, egg-shaped leaves 7-15 cm long and small, fragrant white flowers with five petals that are clustered together along a central axis, 4-12 cm long. Each petal is about 7 mm in length. The dried, peppercorn-like fruit typically remains on the shrub over the winter.



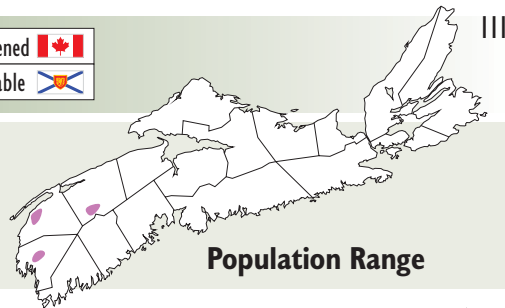
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## STATUS

Threatened 

Vulnerable 

Located along the shores of six lakes in southwestern Nova Scotia.



## Population Range

## Habitat

Occurs in open, shrubby lakeshore banks in seasonally wet, acidic till. Usually found in headwater lakes (lakes at the top of watersheds). Sweet Pepperbush can also extend along shaded brooks and into adjacent forest habitat. Flowering is not typically observed when shaded.



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Sweet Pepperbush is typically found in the shrub zone along lake shorelines. Look for its flowers between late-July and September.

## Interesting Points

- Its name is derived from its sweet fragrant flowers and peppercorn-like fruit.
- Since 1731 this species has been cultivated as an ornamental shrub, however these cultivars are genetically different from the native Sweet Pepperbush found on only a few lakes in NS.
- Observed to be unpalatable to deer.



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Sweet Pepperbush flowers are nectar rich

## Similar Species

### Meadow Sweet:

Long narrow leaves; white flowers with wide petals.



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### Canada Holly or Winterberry:

Leaves similar; single white flowers; red fruit.



© ALAIN BELLIVEAU



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Flower progression from buds to flower clusters to dried fruits

## Threats to Survival

- Encroachment of invasive species, including Glossy Buckthorn.
- Physical alteration of the shoreline and shrub zone (development, vegetation removal, infilling, artificial beaches, lawns, etc).
- Nutrient run-off into lakes from agricultural operations.

## How You Can Help 2 of 13

Plant only native or non-invasive species. Ask questions at your local garden centre. Non-native cultivars of Sweet Pepperbush should not be planted in Nova Scotia and it is illegal to import, purchase or plant endangered species. Remove and properly dispose of Glossy Buckthorn and other invasives on your property. Learn more in the Invasive Alien Species Guide (page vii).



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Dr. Nick Hill surveying Sweet Pepperbush

## Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

**Contact:** NS DNR (902) 679-6091

**Info:** Invasive Alien Species Guide: [www.merseytobeatic.ca/products-guides.php](http://www.merseytobeatic.ca/products-guides.php)

**Sighting Reports:** 1-866-727-3447 or [www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings](http://www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings)

**Stewardship:** Nova Scotia Nature Trust: [nature@nsnt.ca](mailto:nature@nsnt.ca), MTRI: [info@merseytobeatic.ca](mailto:info@merseytobeatic.ca)