

SERVICEBERRY HOLLY

Ilex amelanchier M.A. Curtis ex Chapman

Synonyms: none

Family: Aquifoliaceae (holly)

FNAI Ranks: G4/S2

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Threatened



Shrub with dull red fruits (berry-like drupes) with sessile capitate stigma (dark spot in center of apex); at Apalachee Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.

Field Description: Plant a **multi-stemmed shrub** to **small tree** with **leaves** simple, alternate, toothed, blade usually elliptic, sometimes ovate, rounded to broadly cuneate basally, (10-) 20 - 55 mm wide, mostly 1 - 2.5x as long as wide, deciduous; **tertiary veins** on undersurface of leaf blades reticulate, defining areoles between the raised primary and secondary veins; **fruiting pedicels** 6 - 14 mm long (averaging about 10 mm); **fruit** berry-like drupes, surface dull, red at maturity, with sessile capitate stigma (dark spot in center of apex).

Similar Species: While superficially similar to plants in many families (woody, simple, alternate, toothed, stipules), no other deciduous holly has blades broadest near middle (elliptic to ovate) with the abaxial tertiary veins reticulate (forming well-defined areolae).

Related Rare Species: Krug's holly (*Ilex krugiana* var. *krugiana*) is a rare tree occurring in south Florida pine rocklands and rockland hammocks, but in no way resembles serviceberry holly in its appearance, habitat, or range.

Habitat: Found on seepage stream banks and swamps.

Best Survey Season: Flowering April - May; fruiting October - November (- April).

Range-wide Distribution: A Southeastern Coastal Plain endemic: southeast NC south to the FL panhandle and west to southeast LA (reports from southeast VA appear to be based on confusion of material); disjunct in west LA (Vernon Parish).

Conservation Status: The species is found in widely scattered locations of the panhandle, where it occurs in floodplain swamp and the edges of sandhill ponds. At a few known populations it is a common understory shrub or tree in floodplain swamp habitat. These populations are at risk from forestry operations and manipulation of river corridors or pond complexes through ditching, draining, or damming.

Protection and Management: Protect known stands from forestry operations and manipulation of water within river corridors and sandhill pond complexes.

References: Weakley, A. S. and the Southeastern Flora Team 2025, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011, Wunderlin and Poppleton 1977

Taxonomic standard: Flora of the Southeastern United States (Weakley et al. 2023)



Leaves simple, alternate, toothed, elliptic (to ovate), abaxial tertiary veins reticulate (well-defined areolae), deciduous; at Apalachee Wildlife Management Area. Photo by J. Richard Abbott.



Closeup of bark, stem ~7 cm wide; at Apalachee Wildlife Management Area. Photo by J. Richard Abbott.



On the edge of a sandhill upland lake at Apalachee Wildlife Management Area.
Photo by Kelly Anderson.