

**2013  
March Plant of the Month**



**Fetterbush**  
***Eubotrys racemosa* (L.) Nutt.**

March is the start of spring. As the days warm many of our early flowering trees and shrubs will start their yearly display. One family that is well represented with early flowers and also widespread in New Jersey is the Blueberry or Heath family. Within this family is a suite of early flowering species that are visible in the spring and fetterbush is one such species. This 1-3 meter shrub can be difficult to identify. It mimics blueberries and can be confused with *Lyonia*. If the flowers or last year's capsules are not present, the plant may be a head scratcher. One clue is the shining green on both the top and bottom of the leaf, a sharp and distinct tooth pattern on the leaf edge and the coppery color on newly expanding leaf tips.

Once flowering, fetterbush is a delight to the eye and nose. It has a sweet smell that is highlighted by its bright white bell shaped flower. The bell shape or campanulate form is a characteristic of the heath family and can be seen in many of the fetterbush's cousins such as blueberries, huckleberries and laurels. Unlike blueberries and huckleberries, fetterbush produces a hard 5 chambered capsule not an edible blue fruit.

The plant is found on moist or wet soils yet it can be found a distance from wetlands if the soils are acidic and retain moisture through the summer months. For that reason you have to anticipate this plant throughout the landscape from watershed divide to the bottoms of the lowest swamps. As the early spring cool weather gives way to warmer days, be prepared to be dazzled by this common New Jersey native flowering shrub.