

## 2022 November *Guess that Plant*



*Chionanthus virginicus* L., Fringe Tree; Old man's Beard

November's *Guess that Plant* was a native sub canopy tree naturally limited to southern New Jersey. Fringe tree is a member of the Loganiaceae, the Olive Family. Our *Guess that Plant* along with the genus *Fraxinus* are New Jersey's native members to this family that includes lilacs and privets, the non-natives occasionally present in our flora. Today, fringe tree is naturally restricted to lowlands including the Alloway Creek, Stow Creek, Maurice River and Cohansey River watersheds. Mary Hough (1983) found voucher specimens for Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Gloucester, Cumberland and Salem County. The photo above is from a Salem County population in the Burden Hill forest, east of Gravelly Hill Road, along Jericho Road at the intersection with Stow Creek.

Fernald (1950) said the species occupies a wide range of habitats depending on the region it was found. Damp woods, thickets, or bluffs describe his habitat interpretations. Mary Hough adds stream sides, or moist soils to the habitat descriptions. In today's interpretation of the landscape, the plant is found in freshwater wetland deciduous forest, normally dominated by red maple, black gum and sweet gum. Understory associates include sweet bay and sweet pepper bush. It would be considered a FACW species, with occurrences elsewhere based on landscape escapes.

Fringe tree flows in the late spring, usually April and May. Moerman (1998) describes washes and poultice uses for the species. It was used by the southern tribe Choctaw for wounds and sores. Elsewhere used to wash cuts and bruises. It is too late to see the plant because our *Plant of the Month* blends in the winter with magnolia and young maples. Anyone wishing to see the species must wait until next spring.