

IDENTIFICATION: Pondberry (*Lindera melissifolia*) is a deciduous, aromatic shrub in the family Lauraceae. It grows to about 6 feet in height in dense colonies of green or brown stems with yellowish bases. Alternate, drooping leaves are ovately to elliptically shaped and have a sassafras-like odor when crushed. The small, fleshy, single seeded, bright red (when mature) fruit matures in late autumn (August to early October). Pale yellow flowers appear in February to mid-March in tight, stalkless clusters.



Photo Credit: Dana Stone, AL. Forestry Commission

This species is typically associated with shallow depression ponds in wetland habitats. It was thought to be extirpated from Alabama at the time of [listing as an endangered species in 1986](#). Since then, it has been documented in Covington County by the Natural Heritage Section of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), a close relative to pondberry, may be found in close proximity but is usually restricted to higher, drier habitats.



Photo Credit: Alan Cressler

The recovery plan states this species may be downlisted to threatened when 15 self-sustaining populations have been protected. Twenty-five self-sustaining, permanently protected populations are necessary for delisting. Laurel wilt, a fungal disease of plants in the Laurel family, has been known to occur in Alabama since 2011 and primarily affects redbay and sassafras trees. The fungus is carried from tree to tree by a small beetle called the redbay ambrosia beetle. The fungus that causes laurel wilt is very aggressive and mortality is thought to occur in trees attacked by a single female beetle. The two pondberry populations in Alabama also have redbay in close proximity. Hopefully, these populations will not be negatively impacted by the laurel wilt fungus.

FORESTRY CONSIDERATIONS: Compliance with BMPs may limit logging activities around pondberry due to the wetland nature of its habitat. Pre-harvest plans should include a strategy to be as environmentally friendly as possible to sites with pondberry. Location of skid trails, loading decks, roads and other high use areas should be carefully planned to minimize negative impacts. Care should be taken to ensure that forest management activities don't alter the flow of water downslope to pondberry habitat. Herbicide use should be carefully planned and follow label directions.

DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTY: This plant is known or believed to occur in Coffee, Covington and Geneva counties.

