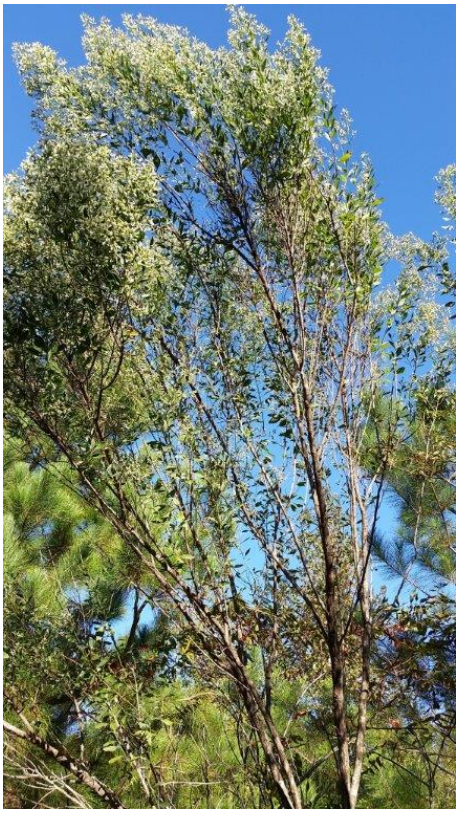
Eastern Baccharis

EB100815



PLANT: Eastern Baccharis *(Baccharis halimifolia* L.*)* is also known as groundsel tree, saltmyrtle, seamyrtle, silverling, and baccharis. It is native to the United States and is distributed from Massachusetts south to Florida and west to Texas. Eastern baccharis naturally inhabits the edges of tidal fresh and brackish water marshes, back dunes, open forests, fields, and desert habitats. In recent years there appears to be an increasing occurrence of it in pine plantations, agricultural fields, commercial pastures, and disturbed areas.

IDENTIFICATION: Eastern baccharis is a deciduous plant that can have the form of a shrub/bush or small tree. It can grow up to 10 feet tall and may have one or more stems and several erect branches. The leaves are simple-alternate, thick and semi leathery, variable in shape and can be bright to grayish green in color. The leaves may be oval, diamond, or egg shaped and are coarsely toothed on the upper half. They are 1 to 3 inches long and ¼ to 2 inches wide; upper leaves may have completely smooth margins. In the winter when the plant loses it leaves the stems remain slightly green. This plant is dioecious, which means there are separate male and female plants. Eastern baccharis flowers during September and October. The females produce clusters of small white flowers at the end of branches. The flowers are very showy once they mature, it will appear as though the they are covered in cotton. The seed is dispersed in October or November by the wind. The seed have silky hairs that allow it to be carried long distances. Seed is produced in prolific numbers and can remain viable for up to a year. Eastern baccharis can be confused with high-tide bush which has opposite, regularly toothed leaves and bare gray stems in the winter.

ECOLOGY: The plant is adapted for coastal conditions, it is very resistant to salt spray, flooding, and can tolerate poor sites with low nutrient levels. It does have some wildlife value as small birds will frequently nest in the open branches. It has been used as an ornamental in urban areas around the coast, this is cautioned because the pollen is thought to be allergenic. The seed requires light to germinate so it is often found in open areas. Fence rows, field edges, and disturbed areas such as recently thinned pine stands are especially prone to invasion. The plant may go unnoticed until it blooms in the fall. Baccharis can grow to over 3 feet tall in 2-3 years and will compete for resources that would otherwise be available to crop species in a commercial pine plantation or pasture setting. E. baccharis will readily colonize irrigation ditches and drains because they provide favorable habitat. When E. baccharis is present in natural coastal locations, the baccharis foliage feeding beetle (*Trirhabda*

baccharidis) can reach very high densities. The beetle larva hatch in the fall and can completely defoliate large numbers of E. baccharis. The beetle is rarely observed when the plant colonizes offsite (in a pine plantation for instance).

PREVENTION& CONTROL: Being that the seed requires significant light to germinate, maintaining a dense stand of trees or native warm season grasses under thinned pines should provide enough shade to discourage seed germination. As the seed is only viable for about a year, the local eradication of a population at a single point in time could rapidly curb regeneration. If the population is not completely eradicated, it could quickly rebound because of the prolific seed production of the species. There are a few different control mechanisms for treating established populations of baccharis. Eastern baccharis is said to be somewhat intolerant of fire, though this has not been proven scientifically. Prescribed burning is normally the most cost effective means for controlling a variety of undesirable vegetation. If prescribed burning is not an applicable control mechanism, mechanical or herbicide control can be used. E. baccharis will re-sprout following mechanical control. A study conducted by the University of Arkansas at Monticello showed that repeat (minimum of two) mechanical treatment (cutting with brush cutters) in the winter months would eradicate approximately 50% of the population. Mechanical treatments tend to be more expensive than prescribed burning. Herbicide treatment is another effective control mechanism. Triclopyr ester product (25% v/v) with a basal oil is effective for treating individual plants with a cut stump treatment. Triclopyr ester (20% v/v) with a basal oil is effective for basal bark treatments and 2% v/v with a surfactant is effective for foliar treatments. Be sure to select a triclopyr ester product labeled for the site. Glyphosate has not been found effective for foliar treatment of eastern baccharis.

WARNINGS: Eastern baccharis is poisonous to livestock, but is not very palatable and is rarely a problem. It is also poor to moderate for white-tail deer browse. When utilizing herbicides always read the label and utilize a certified pesticide applicator.

Source: NRCS Plant Fact Sheet: Eastern Baccharis, Alabama Cooperative Extension: Eastern Baccharis Identification and Control, Control & management of eastern baccharis in a recently established bottomland hardwood plantation.

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