

## Shrubs and Small Trees for Coastal Virginia – The Underutilized, Underappreciated, and Unusual

### Shrubs

#### *Abelia chinensis* - Chinese Abelia

- fragrant white flowers in summer; extremely attractive to butterflies; attracts hummingbirds as well; semi-evergreen to deciduous
- 5-7' tall and wide with an informal arching habit
- full sun to partial shade in moist well drained soil; drought tolerant

#### *Acca sellowiana* - Pineapple Guava

- dramatic and unusual late-spring flowers have pink to white petals and showy red stamens; evergreen foliage is a soothing silvery blue-green
- delicious edible fruit in late summer; multiple plants produce better fruit set
- 6' tall and wide with a rounded habit
- full sun is best for flowers and fruit, but will tolerate part shade; tolerant of coastal conditions and sandy soil

#### *Aralia spinosa* – Devil's Walkingstick

- Virginia native
- frothy white flower clusters in summer attract nectar seeking insects; dark purple-black fruit in fall is attractive to fruit-eating birds; attractive deciduous foliage can have nice fall color; common name comes from thorny stems
- usually grows 10-20', but can be larger; clump-forming
- full sun to partial shade in moist well drained soil; tolerant of less than ideal situations

#### *Arbutus unedo* 'Compacta' – Strawberry Shrub

- evergreen with the unusual habit of fruiting and flowering at the same time, usually in December; this year's white flowers produce next year's red edible fruit; attractive cinnamon colored bark
- 6' tall and wide or more with an upright habit
- full sun to fair shade in moist well drained soil; drought tolerant

#### *Baccharis halimifolia* – Saltbush

- Virginia native
- fleecy white clouds of flowers in late summer; deciduous
- 5-12' tall and wide with a multi-stemmed irregular habit
- full to fair shade; tolerant of regular salt flooding, and marshy soils, will also grow in other poor soils

*Callicarpa americana* - American Beautyberry

- Virginia native
- pale lavender flowers in summer produce clusters of bright purple fruit early to mid-fall; foliage repels mosquitoes
- 3-6' tall and wide
- full sun to moderate shade in moist soil

*Calycanthus raulstonii* 'Hartlage Wine' - Raulston's Allspice

- showy red flowers in late spring; a cross between our native *Calycanthus* and a Chinese species
- 8' tall and wide
- full sun to light shade in moist well drained soil

*Ceanothus americanus* - New Jersey Tea

- Virginia native
- fragrant white flowers in late spring to early summer are very attractive to pollinators; turkeys and other birds enjoy the seeds; deciduous
- 3-4' tall and wide with a rounded habit; slow to establish
- full sun to partial shade; must have well drained soil; large root system makes them drought tolerant, but difficult to transplant once established

*Cephalanthus occidentalis* – Buttonbush

- Virginia native
- creamy, fragrant white flowers in summer are attractive to pollinators, butterflies, and hummingbirds; birds like the seeds; deciduous foliage turns yellow in the fall
- 5-12' tall by less in width with an open habit; multi-stemmed
- full to partial sun in moist soil; very tolerant of wet and swampy soils, but not drought tolerant
- Sugar Shack® is 3-4' tall and wide

*Cephalotaxus harringtonia* – Japanese Plum Yew

- evergreen conifer; dark green foliage; excellent substitute for yews in Southern climates
- 'Prostrata' is a low mounding form at 2-3' tall, and 'Fastigiata' is an upright narrow form at 8-10' tall by 3-5' wide
- partial to full shade in moist well drained soil; heat and drought tolerant

*Cestrum* 'Orange Peel' or 'Lemon Peel' - Hybrid Jessamine

- clusters of either orange or yellow flowers bloom from early summer through fall; attractive to hummingbirds; nocturnal fragrance; deciduous
- 5-6' or more with an upright habit
- full to partial sun in moist well drained soil; drought tolerant; in severe winters it will die to the ground, but easily returns

*Citrus trifoliata* 'Flying Dragon' - Trifoliolate Orange

- contorted green branches with talon-like thorns; white flowers in spring, and orange fruit in early fall
- 8-12' tall by slightly less in width
- full sun to moderate shade in moist well drained soil; drought tolerant

*Clethra alnifolia* – Sweetpepper Bush, Summersweet

- Virginia native
- 3-5" long racemes of very fragrant white flowers in late spring to early summer; extremely attractive to pollinators; deciduous; golden yellow fall foliage
- 3-8' tall and wide with a suckering spreading habit
  - 'Crystallina' 2.5-3' tall by 3-4' wide
  - Einstein™ 3-4' tall and wide with 12" curly flower spikes
  - 'Hummingbird' 3-4' tall and wide
  - 'Ruby Spice' 3-6' tall and wide, the best pink cultivar
  - 'Sixteen Candles' 3-6' tall and wide, larger flowers
  - 'Vanilla Spice' 3-6' tall and wide, larger flowers
- full sun to partial shade in moist soil; tolerant of wet soils

*Corylopsis spicata* - Spike Winterhazel

- chains of small yellow flowers bloom in late winter; deciduous; attractive winter silhouette
- 6-8' tall and wide
- full sun to partial shade in moist well drained soil
- other *Corylopsis* species are available, but this is my favorite

*Cyrilla racemiflora* - Swamp Titi, Leatherwood

- Virginia native (into the Caribbean and northern South America)
- slender white, fragrant flower clusters bloom in summer; attractive to butterflies and pollinators; foliage turns orange and red in fall; deciduous to semi-evergreen
- 10-30' tall by half as wide; can be a large shrub or small tree;
- full sun to partial shade in moist to wet soil; not drought tolerant; very salt tolerant

*Edgeworthia chrysantha* – Paperbush

- beautiful silvery buds open to golden yellow flowers in winter; very fragrant; foliage may appear tropical
- 6' tall and wide with a rounded habit, often grown as a standard
- partial shade is best, but tolerant; moist well drained soil

*Euonymus americanus* – Hearts-a-Bustin'

- Virginia native
- insignificant small, pale green flowers in late spring; showy orange and red fruits in autumn; green stems year-round; sparse foliage can have nice fall color
- 4-6' tall and wide with a wispy suckering habit
- partial shade in moist well drained soil; tolerant of drought and wet soils

*Euonymus phellomanus* – Chinese Winged Euonymus

- insignificant spring flowers produce showy pink fruit in fall; attractive corky bark ridges stand out in winter; may have red fall foliage
- 12-15' tall by half as wide with an upright habit
- sun to partial shade in moist well-drained soil; site where winter sun is caught behind to highlight bark

*Fatsia japonica* (variegated forms) – Fatsia, Japanese Aralia

- evergreen foliage; white flowers in early winter
- up to 6' tall by slightly less in width
- full to partial shade in moist well drained soil; drought tolerant
  - 'Murakumo Nishiki' – yellow and green variegation
  - 'Variegata' – white and green
  - 'Spider Web' – delicate white and green

*Hamamelis* hybrids – Witchhazel

- colorful, fragrant, winter flowers can be yellow, orange, or red; fantastic fall foliage
- can get 15-20' tall and wide, but usually less
- full sun to partial shade in moist well drained soil
- native *Hamamelis* are garden-worthy, but the hybrids offer the best flower color

*Ilex verticillata* – Winterberry

- Virginia native
- small white flowers in spring; copious red fruits on female plants in fall and winter; deciduous; dioecious and must have compatible males and females
- 6-15' tall by slightly less wide; size varies by cultivar, dwarf forms available
- full sun to partial shade in moist soil; tolerant of wet and heavy soils

*Illicium* 'Woodland Ruby' - Pink Anisetree

- hybrid with pinky red “starfish” flowers spring to mid-summer
- 8-10' tall by 6-8' wide with an upright habit
- full to partial shade in moist soil

*Magnolia figo* 'Port Wine' - Banana Shrub

- intensely fragrant ivory-pink flowers in early summer; evergreen
- 8-10' tall and wide; rounded habit
- full sun to light shade in moist well drained soil

*Osmanthus fragrans* – Fragrant Sweet Olive

- extremely fragrant white flower clusters in fall; evergreen
- 10-15' tall by 8-10' wide, maybe larger with age
- full sun to moderate shade in moist well drained soil
  - *var. aurantiacus* – orange flowers
  - 'Fodingzhu' – larger flowers

## *Rhododendron* species – Native Azaleas

### *R. atlanticum* - Coastal Azalea

- Virginia native
- fragrant white flowers blushed with pink in April; attracts hummingbirds and insect pollinators
- 3-6' tall and wide
- partial shade in consistently moist but well drained soil

### *R. austrinum* and hybrids – Florida Flame Azalea

- Southeast native
- flower color varies between pale yellow, gold, bright yellow, orange to red depending on selection; many cultivars and hybrids available; fragrant; attracts hummingbirds and insect pollinators
- 8-10' tall and wide
- partial shade in moist well drained soil

### *R. canescens* - Piedmont Azalea

- Southeast native
- sweetly fragrant pink flowers in spring; deciduous; attracts hummingbirds and insect pollinators
- 6-15' tall by slightly less wide
- partial shade in consistently moist but well drained soil

### *R. periclymenoides* - Pinxterbloom Azalea

- Virginia native
- soft pink, slightly fragrant flowers in April, sometimes white; deciduous; attracts hummingbirds and insect pollinators
- variable 4-10' tall by less in width
- partial shade in consistently moist but well drained soil

### *R. prunifolium* - Plumleaf Azalea

- Southeast Native
- orange-red to red flowers in summer, other colors also; deciduous; attracts hummingbirds and insect pollinators
- 8-12' tall by 6-8' wide
- partial shade in consistently moist but well drained soil

### *R. viscosum* – Swamp Azalea

- Virginia native
- fragrant white flowers in late spring/early summer; deciduous; attracts hummingbirds and insect pollinators
- variable 2-8' tall by less in width
- partial shade in moist soil; tolerant of wet soils and occasional droughts

*Sabal minor* – Dwarf Palmetto

- Southeast native
- large blue-green fronds can be up to 3' across; black fruits in fall attract a variety of wildlife; evergreen
- 6x6' typically, though can get up to 10'
- full sun to light shade in moist well drained soil; drought, wet, and salt tolerant

*Spiraea thunbergii* - Bridal-wreath

- delicate white February blooms
- 3-5' tall and wide
- full sun in moist well drained soil
  - 'Fujino Pink' - pink buds opening to blush to white flowers; fantastic late season fall foliage color
  - 'Ogon' – bright gold foliage in spring, chartreuse in summer, then back to gold in fall

*Stachyurus praecox*

- showy butter yellow blooms hang from bare branches in late winter
- up to 10' tall and wide
- full to partial sun in moist well drained soil

*Vaccinium ashei* - Rabbiteye Blueberry

- Southeast native
- blush pink and white flowers late winter – early spring; edible blue fruit in early summer; fantastic fall foliage
- 6' tall by slightly less in width
- full sun to light shade in moist well drained soil

*Viburnum obovatum* – Walter's Viburnum

- Southeast native
- clusters of small, fragrant, white flowers appear in spring; red fruit in late summer matures to black; evergreen in mild winters
- up to 20' tall, but look for dwarf selections
  - 'Densa' 4-5' tall and wide
  - 'Miss Schiller's Delight' 2-3' tall by 3' wide
  - 'Reifler's Dwarf' 10-12' tall and wide
- Full sun to partial shade in moist to wet soil; tolerant of wet soils and slightly salt tolerant

*Zenobia pulverulenta* - Dusty Zenobia

- Virginia native (barely)
- evergreen to deciduous foliage is a powdery blue green in season turning red, orange to burgundy in fall often persisting through winter; clusters of fragrant, white, bell-shaped flowers in spring
- 3-6' tall and wide
- full sun to light shade in moist soil; tolerant of wet soils and dry after established

## Small Trees

### *Aesculus pavia* – Red Buckeye

- Virginia native
- showy red flowers in mid-spring; attractive to hummingbirds; handsome deciduous foliage, but usually falls by late summer
- 12-15' tall and wide; multi-stemmed shrub, or small tree
- full sun to partial shade in moist well drained soil

### *Amelanchier x grandiflora* 'Autumn Brilliance' – Serviceberry

- native hybrid
- showy white flowers in very early spring; very edible fruit turns from red to blue-black when ripe; great fall color
- 15-25' tall and wide with a suckering multi-stemmed habit, but can be trained
- full to partial sun in moist well-drained soil; more disease resistant than species

### *Cercis canadensis* – Eastern Redbud

- Virginia native
- purple-pink flowers in early spring; deciduous
- species can get 20-30' tall by 25-35' wide; commonly multi-stemmed, but singles too
  - Carolina Sweetheart™ – pink, white and green foliage; same size as species
  - Flame Thrower® - multiple foliage colors; 15-20' tall and wide
  - Golden Falls® - golden foliage with a weeping habit; 8' tall by 3' wide
  - Lavender Twist® ('Covey') – contorted weeping habit; 5-6' tall by 6-8' wide
  - 'Merlot' – one of the best burgundy foliage selections; more heat tolerant; 10-15' tall and wide
  - 'Ruby Falls' – burgundy foliage; weeping habit; 6-8' tall by 5-6' wide
  - 'The Rising Sun'- variegated new foliage in orange, yellow to green; decent fall color for a redbud; 8-12' tall and wide
- light shade to full sun in moist well drained soil

### *Chionanthus virginicus* – Fringetree

- Virginia native
- white lacy flowers in May to early June; males slightly showier; females have blue-black fruit in late summer, attractive to wildlife
- 25-30' tall and wide
- full sun to light shade in moist well drained soil; adaptable and easy to grow

### *Cornus elliptica* (*C. angustata*) – Evergreen Dogwood

- showy white flower bracts in late spring-early summer; showy red fruits in late summer; blue-green evergreen foliage
- 15-20' tall by slightly less in width
- partial shade in moist well drained soil
- 'Elsbry' Empress of China® is a commonly available improved cultivar

*Diospyros kaki* – Japanese Persimmon

- delicious and showy orange fruits in fall; can be astringent or non-astringent depending on variety; colorful fall foliage; yellow-green flowers are interesting but not terribly showy
- most named cultivars will stay under 30', but the straight species can get larger; dwarf selections available
- full sun in moist well drained soil

*Euonymus carnosus* - Spindle Tree

- fragrant clusters of showy white flowers late spring to summer; coral red fruits in autumn; spectacular burgundy red fall foliage late in the season; deciduous
- 12-16' tall by 8-10' wide; larger with age
- full to partial sun in moist well drained soil

*Euscaphis japonica* - Korean Sweetheart Tree

- insignificant flowers produce showy, red, heart-shaped fruit capsules that split open revealing blue-black seeds; deciduous, colorful fall foliage
- 12-20' tall by 8-10' wide
- full sun to partial shade in moist well drained soil

*Heptacodium miconioides* - Seven Son Flower

- fragrant white flower clusters in late summer are followed by dusky pink calyx; attractive, multi-colored exfoliating bark; deciduous
- 10-20' tall by half as wide
- full sun to partial shade in moist well drained soil; tolerant of less than ideal conditions

*Lithocarpus edulis* 'Variegata' - Tanbark Oak

- large shrub/small tree noted for its variegated evergreen foliage
- 20- 30' tall by 15-25' wide
- full sun to partial shade in moist well drained soil

*Magnolia macrophylla* var. *ashei* – Ashe Magnolia

- rare Southeastern native
- very large, fragrant flowers in spring, large foliage as well
- dwarf variety only getting 10-15' tall by 8-10' wide
- partial shade is best, but can take full sun with adequate moisture

*Magnolia virginiana* – Sweetbay Magnolia

- Virginia native
- sweetly fragrant white flowers in late spring to early summer; cone-like fruit with bright red seeds; attracts birds; host plant for Eastern Tiger Swallowtail; evergreen to deciduous depending on weather and specimen
- 10-30' tall by less in width; larger with age
  - 'Mattie Mae Smith' – has variegated yellow and green foliage
  - *Magnolia virginiana* var. *australis* – reliably evergreen
- full sun to partial shade in moist soil; tolerant of wet soils and salt

*Styrax japonica* – Japanese Snowbell



- beautiful white bell-shaped flowers in late spring; pink flowered and weeping forms available; no appreciable fall color
- 20-30' tall and wide, graceful wide-spreading tree with horizontal branches,
- full sun to partial shade in moist well-drained soil high in organic matter
  - 'Carillon' is a weeping form
  - 'Pink Chimes' is a pink flowered form
  - *S. obassia* – Fragrant Snowbell has leaves and flowers larger than *S. japonicus*, very fragrant, attractive curving branches
  - *S. americanus* – American Snowbell is a Virginia native wetland species

*Taxodium distichum* – Bald Cypress (Dwarf Selections)

- Virginia native cultivars
- 'Peve Minaret' 6-10' tall by 3-5' wide; dense foliage and pyramidal habit
- 'Cascade Falls' 8-20' tall by 5-8' wide with a crazy weeping habit; may benefit from staking
- like all *Taxodium*, bright green fern like foliage matures to darker green; beautiful russet orange fall foliage
- full sun to light shade in moist soil; tolerant of wet feet and brackish water

*Zanthoxylum clava-herculis* - Hercules' Club, Southern Prickly Ash

- Virginia native
- greenish white flower clusters in spring; attractive red fruit; mostly known for its thorny trunk; host plant for the Giant Swallowtail Butterfly
- 15-30' tall by 10-25' wide
- full to partial sun in moist well drained soil; tolerant of poor sandy soils, drought, and salt

Les Parks

Norfolk Botanical Garden

6700 Azalea Garden Rd.

Norfolk, VA 23518

[les.parks@nbgs.org](mailto:les.parks@nbgs.org)

757-441-5830 ext. 452

**norfolk botanical garden**