



BAYBERRY FAMILY.

MYRICACEAE.

Sweet-fern.

Comptonia peregrina.

Found in April, on dry uplands and along copse borders.

A tough-fibred bush, from 1 to 2 feet high, with many low branches, very leafy, the bark rough, and reddish, or when old covered by a gray bloom.

The long narrow leaf is cut to the midrib into many narrow and irregular lobes, with an entire or slightly notched margin, and a thin texture; the surface is smooth above, and rough underneath; the color a cool strong green. The leaves are set on short foot-stems, placed irregularly and close together. They come following after the flower catkins.



The pistil-bearing flowers gathered in an inconspicuous crimson cluster, like a scrubby little paint brush, and the stamen-bearing flowers, borne in the form of a slender green and brown catkin, are often found on the same plant; they grow close to the ends of the stalk in small groups.

After the blossom season is over, the plant puts forth its thick foliage, and so flavors the air from earliest spring till near midwinter, with the sweet aroma

which belongs to both leaf and flower. Though not evergreen, the dried leaves often cling to the bushes until the new growth displaces them. This is a genuine New England colonist of our sterile pasture hills, growing in large clumps and groups with hardy persistence.

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SWEET-FERN: *Comptonia peregrina*.

Text and drawing excerpted from *Wildflowers from the North-Eastern States* by Ellen Miller and Margaret Christine Whiting, 1895
Nomenclature and Families updated.