

**Dwarf Shadbush** – *Amelanchier spicata* (Lam.) K. Koch

**Family:** Rosaceae

**By Francis Underwood**

*Amelanchier spicata* is a low growing stoloniferous shrub of dry, rocky places. It grows in dense clumps in partial shade or full sunlight. It is generally a shrub of two to three feet but can sometimes attain a height of four feet or more. This shrub is often misidentified as *Amelanchier stolonifera*, but the more properly correct name is *Amelanchier spicata* (Lam.) K. Koch. It is believed to be a hybrid of *A. stolonifera* and *A. canadensis*. It blooms with small white flowers in May and June. The fruit according to Dirr “is purplish black, glaucous, sweet, juicy and of good flavor, ripening in July.”



Dwarf Shadbush  
*Amelanchier spicata*  
Photographer: Francis Underwood

*Amelanchier spicata* (Lam.) K. Koch is a member of a fairly large genus of plants in the family Rosaceae. The genus *Amelanchier* is a group of shrubs or small trees that is native to North America and reaches its greatest diversity in the northeast. There are ten species and two hybrids of *Amelanchier* that are native to the New England states. Gil George lists four species as occurring in Rhode Island, as does Lisa Gould. Neither George nor Gould cites any hybrids as occurring in Rhode Island, but it seems likely, given the propensity of this genus to hybridize, that hybrids do occur here. *Amelanchier* is a rather complicated taxon of closely related species that can be difficult to distinguish from one another.

The flowers of Dwarf Shadbush have five petals, five sepals and twenty stamens they are borne in racemes holding four to ten or fifteen flowers. The racemes occur at the ends of the branches and the flowers often bloom before the leaves open. The leaves are simple, alternate and serrated. In bud the leaves are conduplicate (folded lengthwise down the middle) as opposed to being imbricated (arranged in overlapping scales). The fruit is a small black or purplish pome.

The common name, Shadbush, which is frequently attributed to the *Amelanchier* genus comes from its blooming time which coincides with the running of the river herring or Atlantic Shad. Other common names are Shadblow, Serviceberry, Sarvis, Juneberry, and Sugarplum.

### Propagation

Dwarf Shadbush can be propagated by seed or division of the plants. Propagation by seed requires exposure to a period of cold temperatures. Seeds can be sown after ripening while still fresh and then allowed to overwinter outdoors to break seed dormancy. Also the rhizomes can be divided to produce more plants. This is best done in spring at the start of the growth period or in fall towards the end of the growing season.

### Cultivation

Dwarf Shadbush is easily cultivated in the garden. Soil moisture is not a problem, as it occurs naturally in dry soils. It does spread readily and may have to be thinned out over time. Although it can tolerate partial shade, its preference is full sunlight.



Dwarf Shadbush  
*Amelanchier spicata*

### References:

- Dirr, Michael A. 1990. *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*. Stipes Publishing Company. Champaign, Illinois.
- George, Gilbert. ed. 9, September, 1999. *Rhode Island Botanical Survey Check List*. Privately printed.
- Gould, Lisa L., et al. 1998. *Vascular Flora of Rhode Island*. Rhode Island Natural History Survey.
- Wyman, Donald. 1973. *Shrubs and Vines for American Gardens*. Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. New York.

### Online References:

[http://www.nobanis.org/files/factsheets/Amelanchier\\_spicata.pdf](http://www.nobanis.org/files/factsheets/Amelanchier_spicata.pdf).

[www.eattheweeds.com/.../21\\_Juneberry,\\_Serviceberry,\\_Shadberry.html](http://www.eattheweeds.com/.../21_Juneberry,_Serviceberry,_Shadberry.html).

Plants for a Future. <http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Amelanchier+spicata>.

Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amelanchier\\_spicata](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amelanchier_spicata).

### Illustration:

USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Vol. 2: 292.

**RIWPS Policy** — *Never dig plants in the wild or without the written permission of the landowner. Take seeds sparingly.*

Cultivation Notes is a regular feature in **WildfloraRI**, the Bulletin of the Rhode Island Wild Plant Society. If you would be interested in writing a future cultivation note or have suggestions of plants you would like to see included, please contact Dick Fisher at [Richard.Fisher2@cox.net](mailto:Richard.Fisher2@cox.net). The previous cultivation note topics are listed on the website and there is an easy to follow set of guidelines for the format of your article. — *WildfloraRI* Editorial Committee.