

## NEW JERSEY TEA

### *Ceanothus americanus* L.

Plant Symbol = CEAM

Contributed by: USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center



@ PLANTS

#### Uses

*Ethnobotanic:* Tribes of the Missouri River region used the leaves for tea and burned the roots for fuel on buffalo hunting trips when fuel wood was scarce. The roots of New Jersey tea were used by the Chippewa for pulmonary troubles and for constipation coupled with shortness of breath and bloating. The Cherokee held the root tea on an aching tooth to ease the pain and consumed hot root tea for bowel troubles.

#### Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

#### Description

*General:* Buckthorn Family (Rhamnaceae). New Jersey tea is a native shrub ranging from 2-10 dm tall. The leaves are broadly oblong-ovate, 5-10 cm long by 2.5-6 cm wide. The leaves are wedge-shaped, tapering to a point at the base with a blunt tip. New Jersey tea has a branched, racemose inflorescence (1-4 cm long) with flowers maturing from the bottom upwards. The flower petals are dipper-shaped, 1-1.5 mm long, and white colored.

*Distribution:* For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

*Habitat:* New Jersey tea is usually found in the sandy soils of open woodlands and prairies, and on rocky hillsides.

#### Adaptation

New Jersey tea is fire-adapted. It is typically top-killed by fire, but is a prolific re-sprouter from the surviving rootstock. Where frequent fire occurs, New Jersey tea becomes a dominant species forming clusters among prairie grasses.

#### Establishment

New Jersey tea is a drought tolerant species that grows best in well-drained soils with full sun. New Jersey tea is difficult to transplant, therefore propagation by seed is recommended. Seeds should be planted outside in the late fall or early winter. To improve seed germination for spring planting the seeds should be submerged in hot water (180 deg. F) and allowed to soak overnight as the water cools then planted outside.

#### Pests and Potential Problems

New Jersey tea is susceptible to leaf spot and powdery mildew, however no serious insect or disease problems exist.

#### Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

These materials are readily available from commercial plant sources. Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) office for more information. Look in the phone book under "United States Government." The Natural Resources Conservation Service will be listed under the subheading "Department of Agriculture."

Plant Materials <<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/>>

Plant Fact Sheet/Guide Coordination Page <<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/pfs.html>>

National Plant Data Center <<http://npdc.usda.gov>>

## References

Correl, D.S. & M.C. Johnston 1970. *Manual of the vascular plants of Texas*. Texas Research Foundation, Renner, Texas. 1881 pp.

Easyliving Wildflowers 2001. *Native perennial wildflowers*. Willow Springs, Missouri.  
<http://www.easywildflowers.com/quality/cea.amer.htm>

Gilmore, M. 1977. *Uses of plants by the indians of the Missouri river region*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska. 109 pp.

Great Plains Flora Association 1986. *Flora of the great plains*. University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. 1392 pp.

Hamel, P.B. & M.U. Chiltoskey 1975. *Cherokee plants their uses-a 400 year history*. Herald Publishing Company, Sylva, North Carolina. 65 pp.

Kindscher, K. 1987. *Edible wild plants of the prairie*. University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. 276 pp.

Missouri Botanical Garden 2000. *Plant Finder*.  
<http://www.mobot.org/hort/plantfinder/Code/A/G82.htm>

Moerman, D.E. 1998. *Native American ethnobotany*. Timber press, Portland, Oregon. 927 pp.

Moerman, D.E. 1999. *Native American ethnobotany database: Foods, drugs, dyes and fibers of native North American peoples*. The University of Michigan-Dearborn, Michigan.  
<http://www.umd.umich.edu/cgi-bin/herb>.

Rydberg, P.A. 1932. *Flora of the prairies and plains of central North America*. The Science Press Printing Company, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. 969 pp.

United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fire Sciences Laboratory 2001. *Fire effects information system*. Accessed: 23jul2001.  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/shrubs/ceaa/me/index.html>

## Prepared By:

*Matthew D. Hurteau*

Formerly USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center, c/o Environmental Horticulture Department, University of California, Davis, California

## Species Coordinator:

*M. Kat Anderson*

USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center, c/o Plant Science Department, University of California, Davis, California

Edited: 29jan03 jsp; 09jun03 ahv; 31may06 jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).*

*To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

*Read about [Civil Rights at the Natural Resources Conservation Service](#).*