

Vascular Plants of Milam County

Morella cerifera – SOUTHERN WAX MYRTLE, CANDLEBERRY, SOUTHERN BAYBERRY
[Myricaceae]

Morella cerifera (L.) Small (syn. *Myrica cerifera*), SOUTHERN WAX MYRTLE, CANDLEBERRY, SOUTHERN BAYBERRY. Shrub (small tree), evergreen, with dense, rounded canopy, in range to 500 cm tall; dioecious; shoots without only cauline leaves, foliage of overlapping blades, conspicuously gland-dotted with peltate, multicellular glandular hairs, strongly aromatic when crushed (monoterpenes). **Stems:** initially somewhat angled and 2 mm diameter, with a low, broad ridge descending from each leaf, tough aging cylindrical and woody, internodes 5–12 mm long, dull green with yellow hairs (not in pits) and sparse villous (pilose) on young growth, aging tinged reddish and later forming thin periderm on terminal shoots with slightly raised circular lenticels. **Leaves:** helically alternate, simple, petiolate, without stipules; petiole with pulvinus, < 4–7 mm long, initially tan, ascending to strongly ascending, pulvinus ca. 1 mm long, above pulvinus compressed on upper side and somewhat elliptic in \times -section, gland-dotted and short-villous on upper side, indistinct from blade; blade oblanceolate (obovate), (10–)25–72 \times 5–17 mm, long-tapered at base, entire or subentire and somewhat wavy to serrate only above the widest blade approaching tip on margins (< 7 teeth), broadly acute (obtuse) at tip, pinnately veined with midrib raised on upper surface and principal veins raised on lower surface, gland-dotted with peltate hairs in shallow pits on both surfaces and hairs (resin) especially yellowish and conspicuous on lower surface, upper surface initially short-villous with hairs curved toward tip aging glabrous and satiny, lower surface lacking nonglandular hairs.

Inflorescences: catkinlike spikes, axillary, of unisexual flowers (staminate or pistillate), having tightly overlapping bractlets (bracts) prior to anthesis, spikes from axils of all but the < 5 lowest bractlets. **Staminate spike (ament):** produced before new shoot growth in spring, axillary at successive nodes on leafy 1-year (2-year) twigs, ascending, short-stalked, to 24-flowered, before anthesis ovate to oblong and 6 \times 3 mm, at anthesis cylindrical in outline and to 15 \times 7–8 mm, during pollination with projecting stamens approximately \perp to rachis, spike ascending (not pendent or flexible), conspicuously bracteate; rachis to 12.5 \times 1 mm, light yellow-green, slightly knobby, with scattered short hairs; bractlets (bracts or bracteoles) helically alternate, fused to short pedicel, in bud overlapping, when fully expanded widely spreading or slightly decurved and persistent, cupped fan-shaped (somewhat scooplike), to 1.5 \times 2 mm, whitish to yellowish, 3-veined at base, short-ciliate above midblade. **Staminate flower:** asymmetric, to 4 mm across, = stamens; **perianth** absent; **stamens** 3–5(–7), fused into column \perp to rachis; column 1–1.5 mm long, greenish, stiff; free filaments \pm stiff, unequal, 0.5–2 mm long, whitish, glabrous; anthers dorsifixed, conspicuously dithecal (sacs essentially unfused), (0.75–)1–1.3 mm long, light yellow often blushed crimson above midpoint and aging mostly red, sacs of anthers plump and commonly subequal, longitudinally and outwardly dehiscent; pollen copious, yellowish to pale light yellow; **pistil** absent. **Pistillate inflorescence** (catkin): produced before new shoot growth in spring, axillary at successive nodes mostly on leafless 2-year (leafy 1-year) twigs, ascending, short-stalked, \pm 20-flowered, at anthesis nearly cylindrical, 5–7 \times 1.5–2 mm, whitish and pale yellow-green, conspicuously gland-dotted with peltate, multicellular glandular hairs, bracteate; rachis 0.45–0.5 mm diameter, light green; bractlets

(bracts) helically alternate and appressed, the lowermost bractlets appressed to base of spike, lacking flower or with a vestigial pistil, cupped-semicircular, at anthesis $\pm 0.7 \times 1.3$ mm, whitish + pale yellow-green and often blushed red close to margin, glands yellowish to amber aging red, rounded on conspicuously short-ciliate on exposed outer margin, bractlets of fertile nodes cupped-rounded changing upward to obtuse cupped-ovate to acute cupped-ovate and carapacelike, ca. 1.2 mm long decreasing upward, whitish + pale yellow-green and often blushed red close to margin, gland-dotted with peltate glandular hairs, conspicuously short-ciliate; bracteoles mostly 2, opposite appressed to ovary and cupping edges of ovary (orthogonal to bractlet), membranous, ca. 0.5 mm long, mostly concealing ovary tissue, with peltate glandular hairs on outer (lower) surface. **Pistillate flower:** **perianth** absent; **stamens** absent; **pistil** 1, ca. 2 mm long; ovary “superior” (becoming inferior in fruit), ovoid compressed front-to-back, ca. 0.5×0.4 mm, light green; style 2-forked, lower portion ± 0.25 mm long, light green, the stigmatic branches divergent and exerted from bractlet, tapered to tip, 1–1.5(–2) mm long, pink and light rose base-to-tip. **Fruit:** nutlike, 1-seeded, with 60+ warty protuberances, spheroid (subspheroid), 2–3 mm, black but appearing bluish black when initially covered with white wax, persistent through winter along young twigs (with periderm) on tips of dwarf shoot axes, rachis stiff and radiating from twig, $< 10 \times 1.5$ mm, with closely spaced persistent bases of bracts, scarlet and dull yellow often with tiny scarlet spots and gland-dotted + some upward-pointing short hairs; individual protuberances obovoid to ellipsoid, $0.2\text{--}0.3 \times 0.3\text{--}0.6$ mm, length $<$ width, black, minutely textured.

A. C. Gibson