

## *Lyonia lucida*, Fetterbush<sup>1</sup>

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### Family

Ericaceae, heath family.

### Genus

*Lyonia* is named after John Lyon (1765-1814), a Scottish man who worked in the gardens of Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

### Species

The species name, *lucida*, stems from the Latin word *lucens* which means "glittering, shining, clear."

### Common Names

#### **fetterbush, shiny lyonia**

The common name "fetterbush" refers to the growth habit of this shrub, as it tends to restrict or "fetter" the movement of humans or animals when it grows in abundance. The name "shiny lyonia" refers to this plant's shiny leaves.

### Description

This native evergreen shrub is found along margins of damp swamp lands and ponds as far north as Virginia, south to Florida, and west to Louisiana. It grows best in full sun to partial shade and can reach heights of 3 to 5 feet. The oval leaves are simple and alternately arranged with a leathery and glabrous texture, and smooth, entire margins. A parallel vein runs next to the leaf's edge and a distinct ridge occurs around the lower side of the leaf margin. When young, leaves are a coppery color and as they mature become a darker green, reaching lengths of 1 to 2 inches. Twigs are brown and strongly angular, and plants usually grow with a multi-stemmed trunk. Flowers are bell-shaped, range in color from white to pink, and are approximately 1/2 inch long. Blooms are fragrant and appear as unbranched, elongated inflorescences that flourish in the late winter and early spring. Fruits are approximately 1/3 inch long capsules and turn brown when ripe.

### Allergen

While many plants in the *Lyonia* genus are poisonous if ingested, *Lyonia lucida* is not known to be poisonous. However, many *Lyonia* spp. can cause

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irritation or a rash if sap comes into contact with the skin. Therefore, most *Lyonia* spp. are considered moderately to highly allergenic.

## Applications

### Cultural

It has been documented that Seminole Indians used the wood of fetterbush to make bowls for their tobacco pipes.

### Horticultural

This shrub makes a great addition to wetter landscapes. Its showy flowers add a splash of color in the late winter and early spring. In addition, shiny lyonia is easy to maintain, making it a desirable addition to the landscape.

### Wildlife

Since many members of the genus *Lyonia* are poisonous, it should not be planted in or near areas used by livestock. However, fetterbush does provide browse for white-tailed deer and its flowers are a good source of nectar.

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