

Short Communications

BACCHARIS: A GENUS OF THE ASTERACEAE NEW TO CANADA

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This note reports the occurrence of GROUNDSEL-TREE or sea-myrtle, *Baccharis halimifolia* L. on islands at the mouth of Tusket river (43°46'N, 65°55'W), thus adding a new genus to the flora of Canada.

Cette observation rapporte la présence du séneçon *Baccharis halimifolia* L. sur les îles à l'embouchure de la rivière Tusket (43°46'N, 65°55'O) contribuant ainsi un nouveau genre à la flore du Canada.

Baccharis halimifolia L. is a dioecious shrub which grows one to three metres in height and forms thickets bordering the salt marshes of eastern North America. It has green, angled twigs with three bundle scars. Young stems are scurfy, as are the leaves, and are often dotted with resin. In the fall, the leaves and twigs tend to become dull greyish green, giving the plant a definite greyish hue when viewed from a distance. The leaves are alternately arranged. The lower ones are thick, two to five centimetres in length, diamond shaped and cuneately narrowed basally with short petioles. From the middle to the tip, their margins exhibit coarse, wave-like teeth. Leaves on the branchlets are often smaller and entire. The small, inconspicuous flowers appear in the latter part of August. They are mostly stalked or in distinctly stalked clusters. The fruits are small ribbed achenes, each with a silky white pappus.

I was alerted to the possible presence of this shrub in Nova Scotia by a chance meeting with John Brett of Halifax. John is an experienced cinematographer with a keen interest in nature. Several weeks later, on September 11, 1998, his father, Peter Brett, guided me to an area where the groundsel-tree was found to be growing in great abundance along the salt marshes and adjacent areas of Tête à Millie and Morris Islands (43° 46'N 65° 55'W) at the mouth of the Tusket River in Yarmouth County, Nova Scotia. The masses of white tufted achenes were conspicuous from a considerable distance. Close examination confirmed the identity of the shrub. I had become very familiar with this plant some years ago on an excursion to the Florida Panhandle.

The habitat of *Baccharis halimifolia* is shared by *Aronia melanocarpa*, *Ilex verticillata*, *Myrica pennsylvanica*, and *Rosa virginiana*. Prior to this report, the known distribution of *Baccharis halimifolia* was from Florida (Godfrey, 1988) to Texas and Mexico north to the coast of Massachusetts. (Dwelly, 1980; Fernald, 1993). Further botanical exploration of southwestern Nova Scotia may well reveal a wider distribution of this striking shrub.

It is surprising that the presence of a species as large and conspicuous as *Baccharis halimifolia* has not been reported previously. Two possible explanations for this are that it blends in so well with other coastal shrubbery and/or the colonies are in a remote location. However two other southern shrubs, *Toxicodendron vernix* and *Clethra alnifolia*, are also relatively recent reports from this general area of the province (Roland and Zinck, 1998).

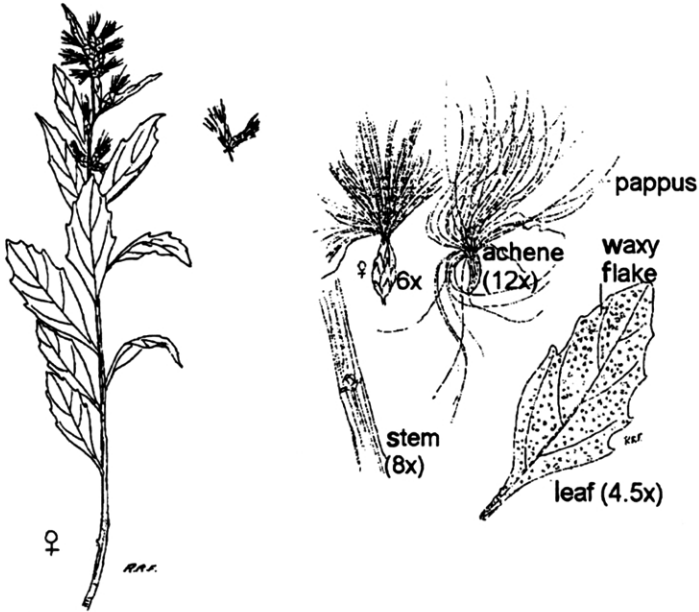


Fig 1 *Baccharis halimifolia* L. was collected for the first time in Canada on Morris and Tête à Millie Islands in Yarmouth County, Nova Scotia in September of 1998.

Voucher specimens have been deposited with the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, Halifax, Nova Scotia (NSPM); the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa, Ontario (CAN); the Grey Herbarium of Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (GH); and the E.C. Smith Herbarium at Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia (ACAD).

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References

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