

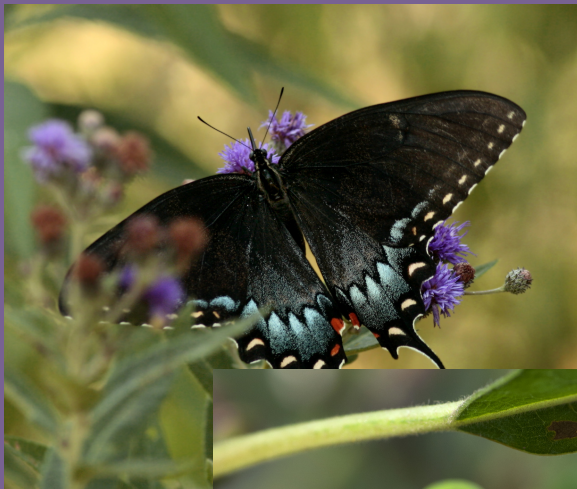
Spicebush "Spicing up the Woods"

(*Lindera benzoin*)

with Naturalist Cathy Ricks

Spicing up the Woods

As you walk in early spring, look for the native spicebush, one of our earliest fragrant flowering shrubs. They have knobby, winter floral buds that open to reveal yellow male or female flowers on separate shrubs (dioecious). The aromatic flowers are welcomed by early pollinators. The native spicebush is well named; its twigs, leaves, flowers, and fruit release a spicy, citrus-like aroma. Crush a leaf, twig or fruit and smell!



Spicebush Swallowtail Butterfly (*Papilio troilus*)

The glossy green leaves unfurl after flowering and host moth and butterfly larvae. The spicebush swallowtail caterpillars have two stages of disguises; the first looks like "bird poop," and, as they mature, more like a "green, scary snake." Silken, folded leaves are the caterpillars' daytime secret hideout. The camouflaged, leaflike chrysalises are green in summer or brown for the overwintering generations.

Fall Feast for the Flocks

Part of the understory, spicebush turns golden yellow in the autumn, lighting up the trails along the Cuyahoga River, Jessie Smith, and Forest Lakes parks. The female spicebushes' bright red berries are gobbled up by migrating birds. Look and listen for flocks of robins, veery and other thrushes.

