

## Forest Farming Quick Guide Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)

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Spicebush is a deciduous, aromatic shrub found in the understories of eastern hardwood forests. Spicebush is attractive to various birds and serves as a host plant for several native butterflies. Its leaves and twigs can be brewed to make tea, and the berries can be used as an allspice substitute. Indigenous peoples use Spicebush as a flavoring agent, food, and in medicines.

### Site Selection:

- Rich, moist, well-drained soils that are high in organic matter, with a pH between 5 and 8.
- Thrives in partial-shade to full-sun conditions; flower and fruit production increases in full sun conditions.
- Presence of indicator species such as sugar maple, yellow buckeye, tulip poplar, trillium, bloodroot, and blackhaw viburnum.

### Site Preparation and Maintenance:

- Remove large sticks and debris that will interfere with planting.
- Selectively prune small understory trees and shrubs to improve airflow and reduce competition.
- Remove invasive species from the site.
- Weed and prune as needed.
- Regularly inspect plantings for signs of disease, cutting away wilted branches.

### Propagation and Planting:

#### *Direct-sowing:*

- Spicebush seeds can be planted in the ground directly after ripe red berries are collected in the fall, ensuring that seeds do not dry out.
- Scuff the top layer of soil with rake, and plant berries in soil a ¼ inch deep.
- Seedlings will likely not emerge until the second spring.

#### *Starting in containers/beds:*

- Collect seeds when berries are red and ripe.
- Remove the red flesh from the seed and store seeds in a clean, damp potting mix or peat in a plastic bag or sown ¼" deep in containers or trays.
- Keep moist and warm (~75°F) for 1 month (mimics early fall when soil temperatures are still warm and late season rainfall begins).
- Then, cold stratify for 4 months: Store in trays or pots on the north side of a structure outside with mesh screens to protect from rodents OR keep in a bag with damp soil in the fridge (~40°F) for the same amount of time.
- Seeds should start to germinate once the soil warms or when taken out of the fridge and sown at ¼ depth outside in a bed or containers.
- Water newly planted seedlings regularly until roots have established.



BRANCH

IMMATURE BERRIES

FLOWER

SPICEBUSH  
*Lindera benzoin*

MATURE BERRIES

LEAF

BUD

