

# Fringe-tree

## *Chionanthus virginicus*

### Description

The fringe-tree is a deciduous shrub or small tree that can grow up to 30 feet (10 m) tall, but is usually much smaller in Pennsylvania. The leaves are oppositely arranged, oval to elliptic in shape, usually 3 to 8 inches (8-15 cm) long and 1½ to 3 inches (3-8 cm) wide, and have untoothed margins. The white flowers, which appear in May, are grouped in clusters. The flowers have four petal-like lobes, which are elongate, narrow, and have a fringed appearance. Flowers of this species are unisexual, with male and female flowers being produced on separate plants, so only female plants produce the dark blue, one-seeded fruit that matures in the fall.



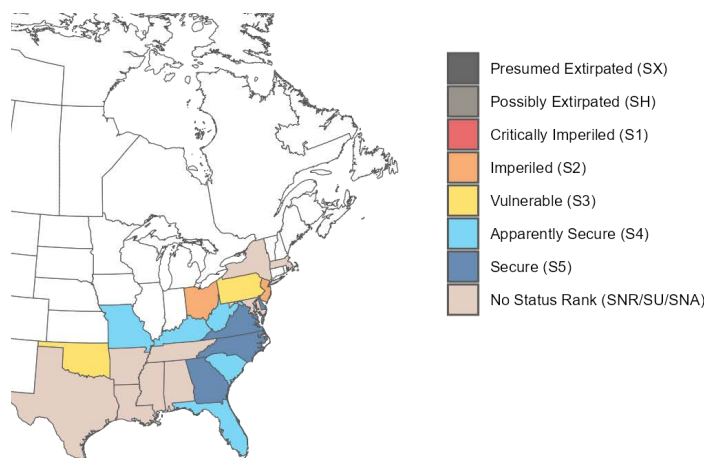
Photo Source: PNHP

### Distribution & Habitat

The fringe-tree has a distribution from New York and Massachusetts south into Florida and west into Texas. In Pennsylvania, it is near the northern border of its range, and has been documented historically from numerous southern counties. The species grows in moist woods and along streams, and is also cultivated as an ornamental.

### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



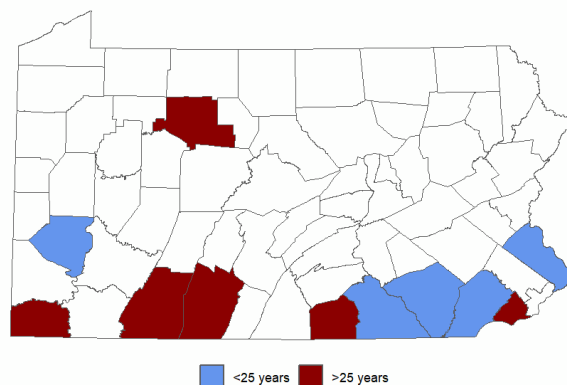
### Conservation Considerations

This species may have declined in abundance from historical levels due to loss of its woodland habitat, invasive species, and excessive deer browsing. The viability of existing populations of fringe-tree and its habitat may be enhanced by creating buffers around fragmented forests and controlling invasive species.

### Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers fringe-tree to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been recently confirmed. It does not have a PA legal status, but has been assigned a suggested rarity status of Threatened by PABS. About 12 populations are currently known in the state.

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NatureServe conservation status ranks **G5** – Globally secure; **S3** – Vulnerable in Pennsylvania

### References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.