

# Climbing fetterbush

(*Pieris phyllyreifolia*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

Climbing fetterbush is an evergreen vine-like shrub found in swamps, moist pinelands, upland mixed forests and sandhills in the Panhandle and several peninsular counties. It blooms fall through early spring. Its typical habit is to ascend the trunks of cypress trees by creeping under the fibrous bark, although it is not parasitic. Other host trees include pine, Atlantic white cedar, Titi and Cabbage palm. It is the only vine-like member of the Ericaceae family found in the United States.



Photo by Alan Cressler, courtesy of Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Climbing fetterbush's small flowers are white, urn- or bell-shaped and born in elongated racemes. Leaves are leathery, elliptic to ovate, and alternately arranged. Leaf margins are generally entire but may bear tiny teeth near the apices. Fruit is a small oval capsule.

**Family:** Ericaceae (Heath, azalea or blueberry family)

**Native range:** Panhandle, central peninsula to Lake County

To see where natural populations of Climbing fetterbush have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).

**Hardiness:** Zones 8A–9B

**Soil:** Moist, acidic soils

**Exposure:** Partial to full shade

**Growth habit:** 15–30'+ long

**Note:** Climbing fetterbush can be pruned into a shrub or trained to grow along an arbor or trellis.

Climbing fetterbush is occasionally available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit [www.PlantRealFlorida.org](http://www.PlantRealFlorida.org) to find a nursery in your area.