Spicebush is one of the our first native shrubs to bloom in the spring. The bright yellow flowers emerge from little round buds before the leaves appear. People mistake it for forsythia, but don’t be fooled!

The spicebush is in the laurel family (Lauraceae). Like many members of this family, most parts of the plant contain aromatic oils. Familiar foods and spices like avocado, bay leaf, cinnamon, and sassafras are in the laurel family. The bright red berries of spicebush, if properly prepared, can be dried and ground for use as a peppercorn substitute. But please don’t pick the berries; the birds need them more than you.