

**Carolina Laurel-cherry, Cherry-laurel, Mock Orange**

**Description.**—Laurel-cherry (*Prunus caroliniana* Ait.) is a shrub or small tree sometimes reaching a height of 25 feet. The trunks are nearly black, dull, crooked, and often bear many lateral branches. The alternate leaves are short-stalked and simple; the leaf-blades, 2 to 4 inches long, are elliptic, pointed at both ends, very glossy on the upper side, and bear few to many sharp teeth along the margins. The pinkish white flowers appear in late winter or early spring in thick racemes 1 to 2 inches long in the axils of the leaves. The individual flowers, about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in diameter, bear five small round petals. The fruits, bluish-black to black and nearly  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in diameter, are borne in clusters of two to five, often persisting until the flowers of the following season appear. Each fruit contains one round stone covered with dry, purplish flesh. The leaves, twigs and kernels smell strongly of peach-kernel odor when crushed. (Fig. 23.)

**Habitat and Distribution.**—Laurel-cherry is commonly used as a hedge plant around homes and to mark driveways. It also occurs in thickets at the edges of woods and hammocks and along fencerows. It is found all over the state.

**Toxicity.**—Cherry-laurel is a cyanogenetic plant. See discussion under sorghum.

**Black Cherry, Wild Cherry, Wild Black Cherry, Rum Cherry**

**Description.**—Black cherry (*Prunus serotina* Ehrh.) is a medium to large native tree, sometimes becoming 100 feet tall and 5 feet in diameter, but small specimens are more common. The bark on the trunk and branches is smooth, glossy, reddish brown to black and marked with numerous lines running around the branches. On old trunks the bark becomes dull, black and broken into blocks or ridges. The alternate leaves are slender-stalked and simple; the leaf-blades, 2 to 6 inches long, are slightly leathery when mature, elliptic, pointed at both ends or rounded at the base, and have numerous small stiff teeth along the margins. The leaves fall early in autumn, often assuming bright red or yellow colors at that season. The small white flowers are produced early in spring on short lateral twigs bearing one to two small leaves and 20 or more stalked flowers. Each flower, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch broad, bears five small round white petals. The fruits are glossy dark purple to black when ripe and each contains one hard, nearly round stone embedded in juicy, purple