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(54) **ITEA PLANT NAMED ‘SMNIVMM’**

(50) Latin Name: *Itea virginiana*
Varietal Denomination: **SMNIVMM**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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(52) **U.S. Cl.**
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See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A new and distinct cultivar of *Itea* plant named ‘SMNIVMM’, characterized by its relatively compact, upright to outwardly spreading plant habit; strong lateral branches; freely branching habit, dense and bushy appearance; attractive autumnal leaf color; freely flowering habit; fragrant greenish white-colored flowers; and good garden performance.

2 Drawing Sheets

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Botanical designation: *Itea virginiana*.
Cultivar denomination: ‘SMNIVMM’.

STATEMENT REGARDING PRIOR
DISCLOSURES BY INVENTOR/APPLICANT &
ASSIGNEE

The Inventor/Applicant and Assignee assert that no publications nor advertisements relating to sales, offers for sale or public distribution occurred more than one year prior to the effective filing date of this application. Any information about the claimed plant would have been obtained from a direct or indirect disclosure from the Inventor/Applicant and/or the Assignee. Inventor/Applicant and Assignee claim a prior art exemption under 35 U.S.C. 102(b)(1) for disclosure and/or sales prior to the filing date but less than one year prior to the effective filing date.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a new and distinct *Itea* plant, botanically known as *Itea virginiana*, commonly referred to as Virginia Sweetspire and hereinafter referred to by the name ‘SMNIVMM’.

The new *Itea* plant is a product of a planned breeding program conducted by the Inventor in Grand Haven, Mich. The objective of the breeding program was to create new freely-branching *Itea* plants with fragrant flowers and attractive autumn leaf coloration.

The new *Itea* plant originated from an open-pollination during the summer of 2013 in Grand Haven, Mich. of an unnamed proprietary seedling selection of *Itea virginiana*, not patented, as the female, or seed, parent with an unknown proprietary selection of *Itea virginiana* as the male, or pollen, parent. The new *Itea* plant was discovered and selected by the Inventor as a single plant within the progeny of the stated open-pollination in a controlled environment in Grand Haven, Mich. during the summer of 2016.

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Asexual reproduction of the new *Itea* plant by softwood stem cuttings in a controlled environment in Grand Haven, Mich. since the summer of 2016 has shown that the unique features of this new *Itea* plant are stable and reproduced true to type in successive generations.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Plants of the new *Itea* have not been observed under all possible combinations of environmental conditions and cultural practices. The phenotype may vary somewhat with variations in environmental conditions such as temperature and light intensity without, however, any variance in genotype.

The following traits have been repeatedly observed and are determined to be the unique characteristics of ‘SMNIVMM’. These characteristics in combination distinguish ‘SMNIVMM’ as a new and distinct *Itea* plant:

1. Relatively compact, upright to outwardly spreading plant habit.
2. Strong lateral branches.
3. Freely branching habit, dense and bushy appearance.
4. Attractive autumnal leaf color.
5. Freely flowering habit.
6. Fragrant greenish white-colored flowers.
7. Good garden performance.

Plants of the new *Itea* differ primarily from plants of the female parent selection in plant habit as plants of the new *Itea* are more compact and uniform than plants of the female parent selection.

Plants of the new *Itea* can also be compared to plants of *Itea virginiana* ‘SMNIVDFC’, disclosed in U.S. Plant Pat. No. 30,233. In side-by-side comparisons, plants of the new *Itea* differ primarily from plants of ‘SMNIVDFC’ in the following characteristics:

1. Plants of the new *Itea* are more compact than plants of ‘SMNIVDFC’.

2. During the summer, leaves of plants of the new *Itea* are lighter green in color than leaves of plants of 'SMNIVDFC'.
3. Flowers of plants of the new *Itea* are greenish white in color whereas flowers of plants of 'SMNIVDFC' are pure white in color.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS

The accompanying colored photographs illustrate the overall appearance of the new *Itea* plant showing the colors as true as it is reasonably possible to obtain in colored reproductions of this type. Colors in the photographs may differ slightly from the color values cited in the detailed botanical description which accurately describe the colors of the new *Itea* plant.

The photograph on the first sheet (FIG. 1) is a side perspective view of a typical flowering plant of 'SMNIVMM' grown during the summer.

The photograph on the second sheet (FIG. 2) is a side perspective view of a typical plant of 'SMNIVMM' grown during the autumn.

DETAILED BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION

The aforementioned photographs and following observations, measurements and values describe plants grown during the spring, summer and autumn in three-gallon containers in a polyethylene-covered greenhouse in Grand Haven, Mich. and under cultural practices typical of commercial production. Plants were two years old when the photographs and description were taken. During the production of the plants, day temperatures ranged from 18° C. to 27° C. and night temperatures ranged from 5° C. to 10° C. In the following description, color references are made to The Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart, 2015 Edition, except where general terms of ordinary dictionary significance are used.

Botanical classification: *Itea virginiana* 'SMNIVMM'.

Parentage:

Female, or seed, parent.—Unnamed proprietary seedling selection of *Itea virginiana*, not patented.

Male, or pollen, parent.—Unknown proprietary selection of *Itea virginiana*, not patented.

Propagation:

Type.—By softwood stein cuttings.

Time to initiate roots plant, summer.—About three to four weeks at temperatures ranging from 18° C. to 27° C.

Time to produce a rooted plant, summer.—About three months at temperatures ranging from 18° C. to 27° C.

Root description.—Fine, fibrous; typically white in color, actual color of the roots is dependent on substrate composition, water quality, fertilizer, substrate temperature and physiological age of roots.

Rooting habit.—Freely branching; medium density.

Plant description:

Plant and growth habit.—Deciduous perennial shrub; relatively compact, upright and outwardly spreading plant habit; dense and bushy appearance; vigorous growth habit and rapid growth rate.

Plant height.—About 42 cm.

Plant width (spread).—About 78 cm.

Lateral branches.—Quantity: Freely branching habit with about 50 primary lateral branches developing

per plant; pinching enhances lateral branch development. Length: About 44 cm. Diameter: About 3 mm. Internode length: About 1 cm to 3 cm. Strength: Strong. Aspect: Erect to about 90° from vertical. Texture: Smooth, glabrous. Color: Close to 144B.

Leaf description:

Arrangement.—Alternate, simple.

Length.—About 7 cm.

Width.—About 2.5 cm.

Shape.—Elliptical.

Apex.—Acute.

Base.—Attenuate.

Margin.—Serrate.

Texture, upper surface.—Smooth, glabrous.

Texture, lower surface.—Slightly rough with prominent venation, mostly glabrous with pubescence along the midvein.

Venation pattern.—Pinnate.

Color, developing leaves, upper surface, spring and summer.—Close to NN137B.

Color, developing leaves, lower surface, spring and summer.—Close to NN137D.

Color, fully expanded leaves, upper surface.—Spring and summer: Close to NN137A; venation, close to N144B. Autumn: Close to 180A, 187B and 143C; venation, close to 180A, 187B and 143C.

Color, fully expanded leaves, lower surface.—Spring and summer: Close to NN137C; venation, close to 145C. Autumn: Close to 141C and 183C; venation, close to 141C and 183C.

Petioles.—Length: About 4 mm. Diameter: About 1.25 mm. Texture, upper and lower surfaces: Smooth, glabrous. Color, upper surface: Close to 180B. Color, lower surface: Close to 180D.

Flower description:

Flower type and flowering habit.—Single small star-shaped flowers arranged on terminal and axillary racemes; racemes narrowly conical in shape and may be upright, arching outwardly or drooping; freely flowering habit with more than 100 flowers developing per inflorescence and numerous inflorescences developing per plant during the flowering season; flowers face upright, outwardly or are drooping depending on the position on the inflorescence; flowers persistent.

Fragrance.—Fragrant, slightly earthy; pleasant.

Natural flowering season.—Plants flower continuously from the late spring into the summer in Michigan.

Flower buds.—Height: About 5 mm. Diameter: About 3 mm. Shape: Ovoid. Color: Close to 157B.

Inflorescence length.—About 11 cm.

Inflorescence diameter.—About 1.75 cm.

Flower diameter.—About 1 cm.

Flower depth.—About 4 mm.

Petals.—Quantity per flower: Typically five in a single whorl. Length: About 5 mm. Width: About 1 mm. Shape: Acicular. Apex: Acute. Base: Truncate. Margin: Entire. Texture, upper and lower surfaces: Smooth, glabrous; delicate. Color: Developing petals, upper and lower surfaces: Close to 157D initially slightly tinged with close to 60A. Fully developed petals, upper and lower surfaces: Close to 157D; color does not change with development.

Sepals.—Calyx length: About 2 mm. Calyx diameter: About 2 mm. Quantity and arrangement: Typically

five sepals per flower arranged in a single whorl. Length: About 2 mm. Diameter: About 0.5 mm. Shape: Narrowly deltoid. Apex: Acute. Base: Truncate. Margin: Entire. Texture, upper and lower surfaces: Smooth, glabrous. Color, upper and lower surfaces: Close to 160C.

Pedicels.—Length: About 5 mm. Diameter: About 1 mm. Strength: Strong, flexible. Angle: Upright to outwardly. Texture: Slightly pubescent. Color: Close to 144B.

Reproductive organs.—Stamens: Quantity per flower: Typically five. Filament length: About 2 mm. Filament color: Close to NN155D. Anther length: Less than 1 mm. Anther shape: Globular. Anther color: Close to NN155D. Pollen amount: Moderate. Pollen color: Close to NN155D. Pistils: Quantity per flower: One. Pistil length: About 1.5 mm. Style

length: Less than 1 mm. Style color: Close to NN155D. Stigma shape: Rounded. Stigma color: Close to NN155D.

Seeds and fruits.—To date, seed and fruit development have not been observed on plants of the new *Itea*.

Pathogen & pest resistance: To date, plants of the new *Itea* have not been observed to be resistant to pathogens and pests common to *Itea* plants.

Garden performance: Plants of the new *Itea* have been observed to have good garden performance and tolerate rain, wind and to tolerate temperatures ranging from about -32° C. to about 36° C.

It is claimed:

1. A new and distinct *Itea* plant named 'SMNIVMM' as illustrated and described.

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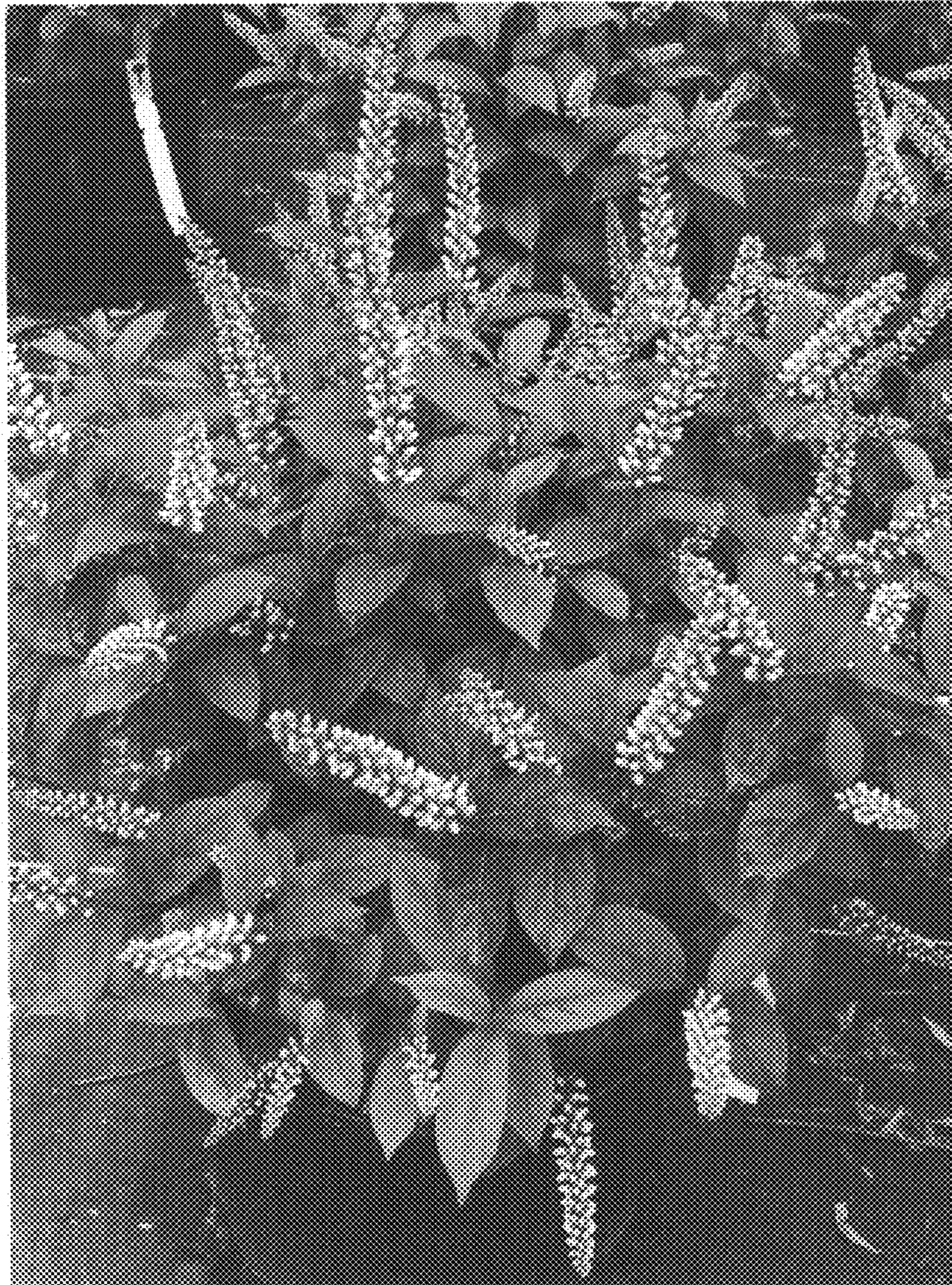


FIG. 1



FIG. 2