



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Ardisia escallonioides*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Marlberry is a 12- to 15-foot-tall shrub native to Florida and the Caribbean region that has a very important place in planting design. It often occurs naturally with Sabal Palms and Stoppers. The dark green, semiglossy leaves of this shrub are 3 to 4 ½ inches long. The small, white, fragrant flowers occur in dense terminal panicles that are 5 inches in length. Flowers are borne at intervals throughout the year but do not last very long. In the late spring this plant bears its small purple fruit.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Ardisia escallonioides*

**Pronunciation:** ar-DIZ-ee-uh ess-kal-lon-ee-OY-deez

**Common name(s):** Marlberry, Marbleberry

**Family:** *Myrsinaceae*

**Plant type:** tree

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10 through 11 (Fig. 1)

**Planting month for zone 7:** year round

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** hedge; near a deck or patio; specimen; screen; attracts butterflies; border

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

### Description

**Height:** 12 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 12 feet

**Plant habit:** oval

**Plant density:** symmetrical habit with a regular (or smooth) outline and individuals having more or less identical forms

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristic:** pleasant fragrance; flowers periodically throughout the year

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch

**Fruit cover:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** red

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Fruit characteristic:** suited for human consumption; attracts birds

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy; no thorns

**Current year stem/twig color:** green

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun

**Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam;

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

**Use and Management**

Marlberry is great in mixed group and background plantings. It can be trained into a small tree by removing lower foliage and branches to expose the interesting trunk pattern. The multiple trunks become an interesting element in the landscape, and they look nice lighted at night. Space them 15 feet apart along an entrance road or sidewalk to create a nice linear planting of multi-trunked small trees. Since they will remain quite dense even in the partial shade, they make a great screen for residential landscapes.

This shrub prefers well-drained soils and a semi-shade to full sun location in the landscape. It will grow in soils with a wide pH range from a sandy humus to calcareous shell and is fast growing.

Marlberry is easily propagated from seed.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.