



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## ***Colubrina arborescens* 1**

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### **Introduction**

Native to south Florida in the coastal upland plant community and the Caribbean Basin, this small tree or large shrub can reach a height of 20 feet or more (Fig. 1). Handsome, shiny leaves are borne on thin twigs covered with rust-colored hairs. Hairs occasionally extend onto the underside of leaves. Prominent yellow veins contrast with the dark green leaves. Plants grow in dense clusters in sunny or partially shaded locations.

### **General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Colubrina arborescens*

**Pronunciation:** kaw1-yoo-BRYE-nuh ar-bor-RESS-enz

**Common name(s):** Coffee Colubrina, Wild Coffee

**Family:** *Rhamnaceae*

**Plant type:** tree

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

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

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; reclamation plant; trained as a standard; hedge; near a deck or patio; specimen; espalier; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; screen; border

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

### **Description**

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 12 to 20 feet

**Plant habit:** round; oval

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

#### **Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

#### **Flower**

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristic:** year-round flowering

#### **Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** round

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

**Fruit cover:** fleshy

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Fruit color:** black

**Fruit characteristic:** attracts birds

#### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

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

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

### Culture

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

**Soil tolerances:** occasionally wet; acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay;

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Soil salt tolerances:** good

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

### Other

**Roots:** usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

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

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

### Use and Management

Colubrina makes a good hedge or screen planting due to the dense canopy. Plant on 5 feet centers to establish a solid mass of foliage several years after planting. Single plants can be trained into a small tree by periodically removing lower foliage and branches as the tree grows taller. It will make a nice ornamental next to the patio or deck since the foliage is pretty and the fruit is small. Small fruit also make this plant suitable for planting near a swimming pool.

Soil in its native habitat is well drained and sandy, usually with a slightly alkaline pH. In the Keys, plants grow in porous limestone.

*Colubrina elliptica* is a similar plant growing in the Florida Keys and the Caribbean Basin. *Colubrina cubensis* is an endangered plant in Florida. The fruit pops open to disburse the seeds. This gives the plant its common name of Soldierwood.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases should cause problems with this plant.

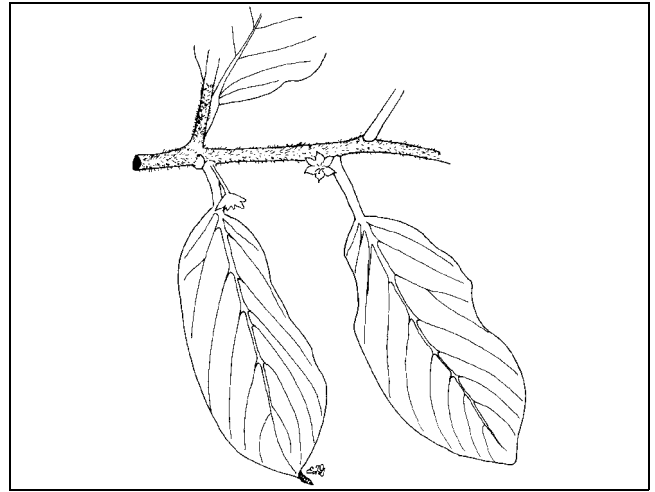


Figure 2. Foliage of Coffee Colubrina