



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Forestiera segregata*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Florida Privet is a 10- to 20-foot-tall shrub or small tree that is densely foliated with small, evergreen leaves. The dark, glossy green leaves are oblong to elliptic in shape and are sometimes shed in the winter. The form commonly found in south Florida (Dade County) has a much smaller leaf than those from other parts of the state. The bark of the younger trees is light brown or gray, and older specimens have a pale yellow bark that is mottled with light brown and green. The bark of the older trees is also roughened by many small, raised lenticels. Bees are attracted to the tiny, corolla-less flowers that have greenish yellow or reddish purple stamens. These flowers are borne individually or in clusters of three or four along the branches, and they occur in the winter and early spring before the new leaves emerge. The fruits are purplish or dark blue berries that ripen in the spring and summer. The birds favor these berries, and the plant produces the fruits in abundance.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Forestiera segregata*  
**Pronunciation:** far-ress-TEER-uh seg-reg-AY-tuh  
**Common name(s):** Florida Privet, Wild-Olive, Ink-Bush  
**Family:** *Oleaceae*  
**Plant type:** tree  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 8B through 11 (Fig. 1)  
**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:** superior hedge; espalier; specimen; screen; attracts butterflies

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

### Description

**Height:** 10 to 15 feet

**Spread:** 5 to 10 feet

**Plant habit:** upright; oval

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** oblong

**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:** spring flowering; winter flowering

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-213, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October, 1999 Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Fruit**

- Fruit shape:** oval
- Fruit length:** less than .5 inch
- Fruit cover:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** purple
- Fruit characteristic:** attracts birds

**Trunk and Branches**

- Trunk/bark/branches:** showy; no thorns
- Current year stem/twig color:** brown
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

**Culture**

- Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun
- Soil tolerances:** extended flooding; acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;
- Drought tolerance:** high
- Soil salt tolerances:** moderate
- 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**

Florida Privet may be successfully used as a specimen or hedge. With regular clipping, it can be planted along a foundation. It makes a superior hedge and is very tolerant of clipping and shearing. Small leaf size and moderate growth rate make it suited for maintaining at almost any height. For best results, keep the lower portion of the hedge wider than the top. Early training can produce a small tree for planting in home landscapes and other areas requiring a small, multi-trunked tree.

This cold hardy plant requires a planting site that receives full sun, and a well-drained soil. It grows poorly in mucky soils. Its native, upland coastal habitat associates include Bay Cedar,

Spanish Bayonet, Cocoplum and other drought and salt tolerant plants. Soils in this habitat are very sandy with shell fragments and a neutral or alkaline pH.

*Forestiera acuminata* is a similar plant hardy into zone 5 that grows in the swamps. *Forestiera ligustrina* grows in the flatwoods and mesic upland hardwood forests of Florida.

#### **Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.