



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Forestiera segregata*¹

Edward F. Gilman²

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>.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

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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.