



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Myrsine guianensis*¹

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Introduction

This evergreen shrub is grown primarily for its smooth green foliage. Myrsine is a dense, vertical growing shrub that can reach a height of 15 to 20 feet. Older plants become spreading and woody with numerous trunks. The attractive leaves of this plant are oval in shape and a medium to dark green color. Young, vigorous plants in the nursery have well spaced leaves along the green twigs, but those on older shrubs tend to cluster toward the ends of the stem. Small inconspicuous greenish-yellow flowers occur in clusters that are found along the branches. Flowers are succeeded by decorative, shiny, black berries; plants of both sexes must be grown close by to obtain fruiting.

General Information

Scientific name: *Myrsine guianensis*

Pronunciation: mer-SIGH-nee gee-uh-NEN-sis

Common name(s): Rapanea, Myrsine

Family: *Myrcinaceae*

Plant type: tree

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

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: reclamation plant; trained as a standard; hedge; near a deck or patio; specimen; screen; border; attracts butterflies; 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)

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 15 to 20 feet

Spread: 8 to 12 feet

Plant habit: upright

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: revolute

Leaf shape: obovate

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

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: greenish-yellow

Flower characteristic: year-round flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-420, 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 cover: fleshy
Fruit color: black
Fruit characteristic: attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; no thorns; not particularly showy
Current year stem/twig color: brown
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; 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: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Myrsine can be utilized in the landscape as an accent plant in a shaded or partially sunny landscape, and is excellent when used in shrub groupings. It is a good background plant in a shrub border forming a fairly dense screen. Plant about 6 to 8 feet apart for a quick forming screen. It is also useful as an understory plant and lends itself well to dune conditions.

Myrsine guianensis will adapt to variable soil conditions including poor drainage. This makes it especially useful near foundations or water retention basins since water often sits here after a rainfall. Regular clipping will be required if used as a foundation planting due to the tendency for the plant to grow 20 feet tall. This shrub grows best in a partial to full shade location in the landscape, and it has a good salt spray tolerance. Native

habitat includes the lee side of coastal upland plant communities where soil is sandy with shell fragments. Soil pH is neutral to slightly alkaline and may be poorly drained. It can also be found in Baldcypress swamps among other wet site tolerant plants.

This plant is commonly propagated by seed. Young plants may also be transplanted from a field nursery with relative ease.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.