



## *Psidium littorale* Cattley Guava<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

This upright, multi-branched, evergreen shrub or small tree has many features which make it a popular landscape choice (Fig. 1). Unfortunately, Cattley Guava has escaped cultivation and has infested ditch banks and other wild areas in south Florida, and its use should be tempered. Capable of reaching 25 feet in height but often seen at 10 to 15 feet, the thick, smooth, dark green, four-inch-long, leathery leaves nicely complement the smooth, grey-brown to golden bark which attractively peels off in thin sheets. The single, white, one-inch-diameter flowers have many prominent stamens and look like powderpuffs in miniature. The blooms appear heaviest in April but can open sporadically throughout the year.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Psidium littorale*

**Pronunciation:** SID-ee-um lit-aw-RAY-lee

**Common name(s):** Cattley Guava, Strawberry Guava

**Family:** *Myrtaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; espalier; fruit tree; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; shade tree; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

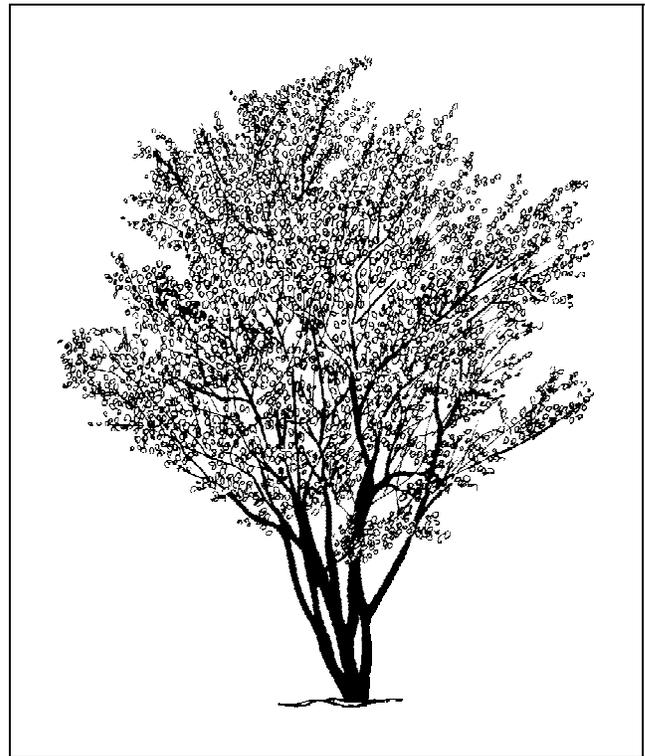


Figure 1. Middle-aged Cattley Guava.

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 12 to 20 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** round; vase shape

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); obovate

**Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** broadleaf evergreen; evergreen

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

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** showy; spring flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval; round

**Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches; .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** red

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown; green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium; thin

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

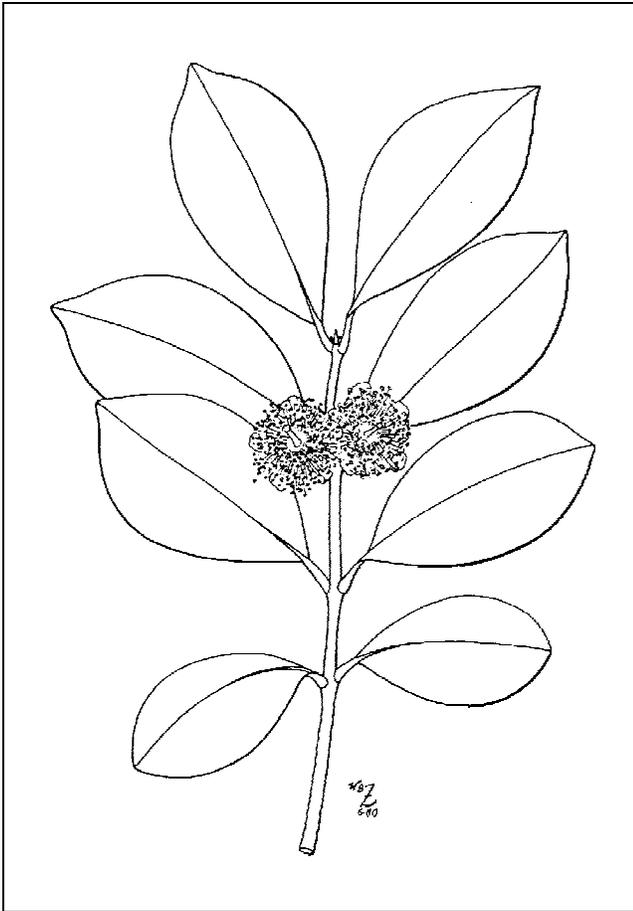


Figure 3. Foliage of Cattley Guava.

shrub border and provides both food and cover for wildlife.

Cattley Guava grows well in full sun or partial shade on a wide range of soils, including sand or clay, but fruit quality is improved on rich soils. Plants are drought-tolerant once established but benefit from a thick, organic mulch. Any necessary pruning should be done after fruiting. Pick the fruit for eating before the fruit fly larvae discover it.

*Psidium littorale* var. *littorale*, Lemon Guava, is slower-growing and has large yellow fruits with delightful, spicy flavor.

Propagation is by air-layerings or by seeds. Seeds germinate easily and rapidly. Seedling plants take seven or eight years to bear fruit.

### Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Fruit fly larvae devour the fruit but do no harm to the tree.

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** No entries found.

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

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

The 1.5-inch-diameter, bright red, pear-shaped fruits ripen to a very dark red in July and are a popular treat - for people and wildlife. Birds, raccoons, and squirrels all love the delicious, sweet-tart, white flesh and will widely spread the small, grape-like seeds. The abundant, fallen fruits may be messy on hard surfaces such as walks and cars, and trees should probably not be planted along residential streets or over sidewalks or patios. It would make a good small boulevard or median street tree and accents an area with its well-shaped canopy and interesting trunk form. It combines well with other plants in a