



## *Cordia boissieri* Wild-Olive<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

Wild-Olive is a native North American evergreen tree which reaches 20 feet in height with a 10 to 15-foot spread (Fig. 1). This small tree is very rarely found and is even reportedly close to extinction. The silvery green leaves have a velvety texture and the showy, white flowers appear year-round, if enough rainfall or irrigation is available. Otherwise, the three-inch-wide, trumpet-shaped, white blossoms with yellow throats will appear from late spring to early summer. The olive-like, white fruits which are produced have a sweet flesh relished by birds and other wildlife and, although edible to man, should not be eaten in quantities.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Cordia boissieri*

**Pronunciation:** KOR-dee-uh boy-see-AIR-ee

**Common name(s):** Wild-Olive, Anacahuita

**Family:** *Boraginaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

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

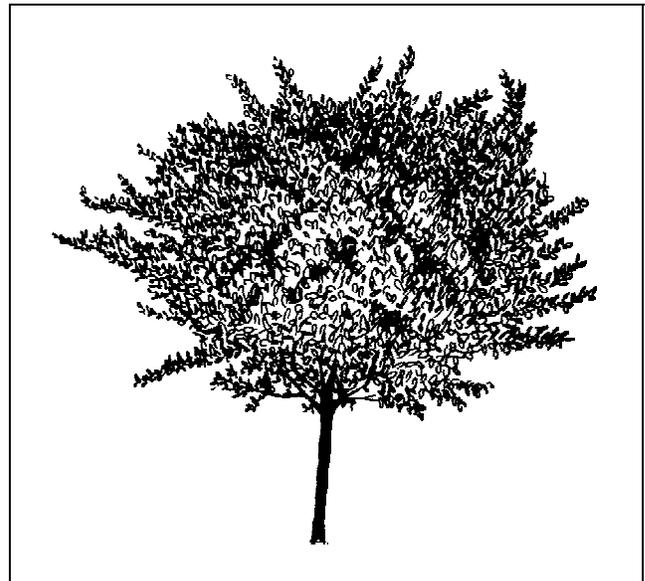


Figure 1. Middle-aged Wild-Olive.

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

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 15 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** round

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-181, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

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

**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green; silver

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** spring flowering; summer flowering; very showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** purple

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun

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

**Drought tolerance:** high

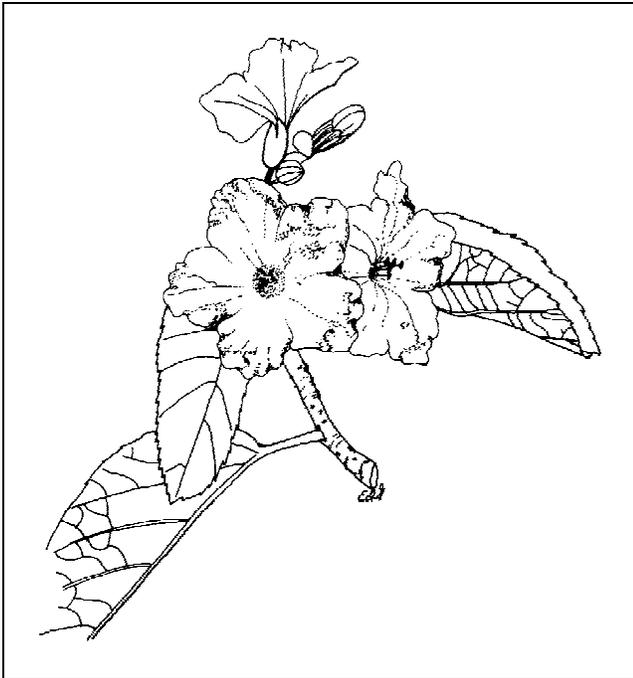


Figure 3. Foliage of Wild-Olive.

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerance:** poor

#### Other

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

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Pest resistance:** no pests are normally seen on the tree

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

This is a versatile plant adapted for use as a specimen tree or as an accent in a shrub border. Showy, year-round flowers make it suitable for placing in a lawn area as a free-standing specimen. It can be planted in an above-ground container and kept looking nice for a number of years when it is carefully maintained.

Wild-olive should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained soils and is highly drought-tolerant. Although hardy to about 20-degrees F., Wild-Olive will lose its leaves in a severe frost. This is the cold-hardy relative of *Cordia sebestena* which is very sensitive to the cold.

Propagation is by seeds and air-layering.

#### Pests

No pests are of major concern.

#### Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.