Byrsonima lucida

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Introduction

This low, spreading, evergreen shrub has a unique character (Fig. 1). In the pinelands of Florida where nutrients are not abundant, it will grow to a height of 1 foot. However, it can reach a height of 8 to 10 feet in the hammocks where soils are richer. The branching habit of the Locustberry is quite irregular, and the shrub is often a host to epiphytes. The spring flowers of this plant occur in clusters and change colors with time. These flowers turn from white to pink and from pink to crimson. The beautiful colors of the flowers attract different species of butterflies. The oil glands on the underside of the petals also change color and turn from green to yellow.

General Information

Scientific name: Byrsonima lucida
Pronunciation: bur-SO-nim-uh LOO-sid-uh
Common name(s): Locustberry
Family: Malpighiaceae
Plant type: shrub
USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: native to Florida
Uses: reclamation plant; screen; border; attracts butterflies
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 12 to 20 feet
Spread: 15 to 30 feet

Plant habit: round
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf**
- **Type:** simple
- **Margin:** entire
- **Shape:** obovate; spatulate
- **Venation:** pinnate
- **Type and Persistence:** evergreen
- **Blade Length:** less than 2 inches
- **Color:** green
- **Fall Color:** no fall color change
- **Fall Characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**
- **Color:** pink; yellow
- **Characteristic:** spring flowering; summer flowering

**Fruit**
- **Shape:** round
- **Length:** less than .5 inch
- **Cover:** fleshy
- **Color:** green; red
- **Characteristics:** attracts birds; persists on the plant

**Trunk and Branches**
- **Type and Structure:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy
- **Current Year Stem/Twig Color:** green
- **Current Year Stem/Twig Thickness:** thin

**Culture**
- **Light Requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun
- **Soil Tolerances:** acidic; occasionally wet; slightly alkaline; sand; loam
- **Drought Tolerance:** high
- **Soil Salt Tolerances:** good
- **Plant Spacing:** not applicable

**Other**
- **Roots:** usually not a problem
- **Winter Interest:** plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
- **Outstanding Plant:** not particularly outstanding
- **Invasive Potential:** not known to be invasive
- **Pest Resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests
Use and Management

Fruits of the Locustberry ripen in the summer and are appealing to mockingbirds and other forms of wildlife. This plant can also take on an Oriental or bonsai appearance with the proper pruning.

*Byrsonima lucida* requires a position in the landscape that receives full sun. It is adapted to different, well-drained soils and is very drought tolerant. It is an endangered plant in Florida.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.