Canella winterana

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

Wild Cinnamon is a salt tolerant large evergreen shrub or small tree native of Florida and tropical America. Purple and white showy flowers cover the tree in summer and fall followed by bright red berries clustered near the tips of branches. Thick, obovate to spatulate shaped leaves fill the dense canopy with a medium- to olive-green color. The trunk grows straight up the center of the canopy and develops thin branches that grow to no more than about 4 feet long.

General Information

Scientific name: Canella winterana
Pronunciation: kuh-NEL-luh win-tur-AY-nuh
Common name(s): Winter Cinnamon, Wild Cinnamon
Family: Canellaceae
Plant type: tree
USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 1)
Planting month for zone 7: year round
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: hedge; espalier; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; screen; 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: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Description

Height: 20 to 30 feet
Spread: 6 to 8 feet
Plant habit: columnar
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: slow
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: obovate
Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

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Canella winterana  -- Winter Cinnamon

Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: green
Fruit characteristic: attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: no thorns
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

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: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: alkaline; sand; loam; acidic
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Use and Management

Wild Cinnamon can be used as a specimen planted alone in the landscape as a small tree. They can be trained with several stems reaching up into the canopy, or left to grow with one trunk as seen in the wild. The rich, dense foliage creates a cooling shade beneath the tree and makes this a good native plant for locating near patios and decks for large and small residences alike. Plant them in a row spaced 10 feet apart along an entrance to a subdivision, mall or commercial landscape for a dramatic impact. The narrow canopy makes it a good candidate for a clipped or unclipped screen along a property line. A number of nurseries offer this wonderful plant for sale.
Best growth and flowering occur in the full sun on a relatively well-drained site. The tree tolerates alkaline soils well. It is an endangered plant in Florida.

**Pests and Diseases**

No serious pests or diseases bother this plant.