Licania michauxii

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

Gopher-Apple is an upright, evergreen plant that attains a height of 3 to 12 inches. This Florida native has stout, underground stems from which arise slender aerial shoots. The stiff leaves are a lustrous green color and have an oblong-spatulate shape. The underside of these leaves are glabrous or felty-pubescent, and the leaf margins are shallowly undulate to entire. Inconspicuous, green flowers appear on this plant in the summer and are followed by ellipsoid drupes that are .5 to 1 inch long. Gopher-Apple has a very high salt spray tolerance and is ideal for coastal landscapes.

General Information

Scientific name: Licania michauxii
Pronunciation: lye-KAY-nee-uh miss-SHOW-ee-eye
Common name(s): Gopher-Apple, Ground-Oak
Family: Chrysobalanaceae
Plant type: shrub; ground cover
USDA hardness zones: 8B through 11 (Fig. 1)
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: ground cover
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Description

Height: 0 to 1 feet

Spread: depends upon supporting structure
Plant habit: upright
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: undulate
Leaf shape: spatulate
Leaf venation: reticulate
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: green
Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: unknown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-341, 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.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems  
**Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown  
**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**

Gopher-Apple can be used as a ground cover along the coast. It tolerates a wide range of soil pH in any well-drained soil.

Gopher-Apple will grow well in full sun on well-drained, sandy soils. It is quite drought tolerant but may not transplant well. Plants should establish well from containers.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.