Myrcianthes fragrans

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

This member of the Eucalyptus family is an attractive, hardy tropical. It was once known as Eugenia simpsonii. It may be a large shrub or small tree and can reach a height of 20 feet with a 15 foot spread. The tiny, deep green leaves contain aromatic oils with the fragrance of nutmeg and grow densely, when in full sun, on the smooth-barked branches. When this plant is grown in shade the foliage becomes less dense, and the trunk displays its attractive, smooth, exfoliating bark. Twinberry has fragrant, white flowers that grow in long panicles which occur periodically throughout the year. These flowers then develop into attractive, red berries that are edible. The flowers attract many species of butterflies, and the fruits are appealing to birds, especially the state bird of Florida, the mockingbird.

General Information

Scientific name: Myrcianthes fragrans
Pronunciation: mer-see-ANTH-eez FRAY-granz
Common name(s): Simpson’s Stopper, Twinberry
Family: Myrtaceae
Plant type: tree
USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 1)
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: native to Florida
Uses: 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); trained as a standard; mass planting; screen; attracts butterflies
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 20 to 30 feet
Spread: 15 to 20 feet
Plant habit: round
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: slow
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: fragrant
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: pleasant fragrance; flowers periodically throughout the year

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round  
**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch  
**Fruit cover:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** red  
**Fruit characteristic:** suited for human consumption; attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; no thorns; showy  
**Current year stem/twig color:** reddish  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade  
**Soil tolerances:** occasionally wet; acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay  
**Drought tolerance:** high

Soil salt tolerances: good  
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

Twinberry performs well with little or no irrigation once it becomes established. It is useful in roadway medians, along unmaintained highways or in buffer strips around parking lots. It can be trimmed into a nice multi-trunked small tree for use near a deck or patio to provide shade to a small area. This configuration shows off the bark nicely.

Twinberry can grow in full sun or deep shade and is most useful where the soils contain shell, marl, or lime rock (alkaline soils). This plant will tolerate wet soils but is also drought tolerant.

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tolerant. It shears well, has a high salt tolerance, and is hardy to about 25 F. Native habitat in Florida is the coastal upland forests with sandy soil containing shells and a neutral to slightly alkaline pH.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.