Myrsine guianensis

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Introduction

This evergreen shrub is grown primarily for its smooth green foliage. Myrsine is a dense, vertical growing shrub that can reach a height of 15 to 20 feet. Older plants become spreading and woody with numerous trunks. The attractive leaves of this plant are oval in shape and a medium to dark green color. Young, vigorous plants in the nursery have well spaced leaves along the green twigs, but those on older shrubs tend to cluster toward the ends of the stem. Small inconspicuous greenish-yellow flowers occur in clusters that are found along the branches. Flowers are succeeded by decorative, shiny, black berries; plants of both sexes must be grown close by to obtain fruiting.

General Information

Scientific name: Myrsine guianensis
Pronunciation: mer-SIGH-nee gee-uh-NEN-sis
Common name(s): Rapanea, Myrsine
Family: Myricinaceae
Plant type: tree
USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 1)
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: native to Florida
Uses: reclamation plant; trained as a standard; hedge; near a deck or patio; specimen; screen; border; attracts butterflies; 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: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 15 to 20 feet
Spread: 8 to 12 feet
Plant habit: upright
Plant density: symmetrical habit with a regular (or smooth) outline and individuals having more or less identical forms
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: revolute
Leaf shape: obovate
Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see
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: greenish-yellow
Flower characteristic: year-round flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
**Fruit cover:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** black  
**Fruit characteristic:** attracts birds

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; no thorns; not particularly showy  
**Current year stem/twig color:** brown  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** 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**

Myrsine can be utilized in the landscape as an accent plant in a shaded or partially sunny landscape, and is excellent when used in shrub groupings. It is a good background plant in a shrub border forming a fairly dense screen. Plant about 6 to 8 feet apart for a quick forming screen. It is also useful as an understory plant and lends itself well to dune conditions.

Myrsine guianensis will adapt to variable soil conditions including poor drainage. This makes it especially useful near foundations or water retention basins since water often sits here after a rainfall. Regular clipping will be required if used as a foundation planting due to the tendancy for the plant to grow 20 feet tall. This shrub grows best in a partial to full shade location in the landscape, and it has a good salt spray tolerance. Native
habitat includes the lee side of coastal upland plant communities where soil is sandy with shell fragments. Soil pH is neutral to slightly alkaline and may be poorly drained. It can also be found in Baldcypress swamps among other wet site tolerant plants.

This plant is commonly propagated by seed. Young plants may also be transplanted from a field nursery with relative ease.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.