**Schaefferia frutescens**

Edward F. Gilman

### Introduction

Florida Boxwood is usually found close to the tidewater area on sandy soil and hammocks (Fig. 1). Although large specimens can grow to 30-feet-tall, most are seen as small to medium-sized shrubs. Smallish leaves borne close together make the plant look similar to the well known Boxwood famous in English gardens. Leaves are yellow-green and rolled over slightly along the margins. Small, greenish white flowers are borne in the leaf axils in compact clusters. Fruits turn from green to yellow then bright red. The bark is smooth grey or brown. The yellow wood is used in boxes and for carving when it becomes available.

### General Information

- **Scientific name:** Schaefferia frutescens
- **Pronunciation:** sheff-FEER-ree-uh froo-TESS-senz
- **Common name(s):** Florida Boxwood
- **Family:** Celastraceae
- **Plant type:** tree
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)
- **Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round
- **Origin:** native to Florida
- **Uses:** reclamation plant; superior hedge; near a deck or patio; espalier; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; screen; border
- **Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

### Description

- **Height:** 15 to 25 feet
- **Spread:** 10 to 15 feet
- **Plant habit:** oval
- **Plant density:** dense
- **Growth rate:** fast
- **Texture:** fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)
Leaf venation: pinnate
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-white
Flower characteristic: spring flowering

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: 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: well-drained; 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

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**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**

Florida Boxwood can be planted in a row to form a nice hedge or screen. It takes to clipping well making it suited for creating a formal appearance. Train the hedge wider at the bottom than the top to allow light to reach the bottom. This will help keep it dense. Larger plants can be trained into small, multi-trunked trees. Nursery operators can also train young plants into a standard with one trunk and a tight head of foliage. This is nicely suited for a formal landscape.

Florida Boxwood is well adapted to partial shade, making it a good candidate for planting along foundations and other areas receiving less than full day sun. It grows well in slightly alkaline soil.

**Pests and Diseases**

No problems appear to affect the growth or health of this plant.