



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Schinus terebinthifolius*¹

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Introduction

Brazilian Pepper is used as an ornamental in California, Arizona and Hawaii, but banned in Florida due to its invasive habit. It is no longer planted in Florida. Except in Florida, it makes a nice ornamental tree when the canopy is thinned to display the attractive bark and picturesque form. Left to its own, the tree becomes a sprawling mess, drooping to the ground like a large shrub. When it is staked and trained to a single trunk 6 to 8 feet tall, the tree creates enough of a canopy to be used along walks or near a deck or patio. The bright red berries are attractive to birds which can distribute them everywhere.

General Information

Scientific name: *Schinus terebinthifolius*

Pronunciation: SKY-nuss tare-rib-binth-iff-FOLE-lee-us

Common name(s): Christmas Berry Tree, Brazilian Pepper Tree

Family: *Anacardiaceae*

Plant type: shrub; 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: not native to North America

Uses: not recommended for planting

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Description

Height: 12 to 15 feet

Spread: 12 to 15 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: odd-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: serrate

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: white

Flower characteristic: fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristic: attracts birds; persists on the plant

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: alkaline; extended flooding; sand; loam; clay; acidic

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: good

Plant spacing: not applicable

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: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: potentially invasive

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Once established, this pest will thrive in almost any location. It grows in wet sites where it can prevent Mangroves, Wax Myrtles and other plants from establishing. It seeds itself into the landscape and has become an unimaginable pesty weed. Eliminate this plant from the landscape when possible.

Pests and Diseases

The plant is itself a pest. Powdery mildew deforms foliage on rapid growing trees. The tree is banned in Florida because it has become a weed, but is used in the desert southwest U.S. landscapes.