Severinia buxifolia

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Introduction

This dense, low-branching, compact evergreen shrub has small, oval, glossy, dark green leaves closely spaced on slender, thorny branches (Fig. 1). Small, white, fragrant, orange-like blossoms in spring and summer are followed by shining black, seedy berries. Growth rate is very slow.

General Information

Scientific name: Severinia buxifolia
Pronunciation: sev-ver-RIN-nee-uh buck-siff-FOLE-lee-uh
Common name(s): Boxthorn
Family: Rutaceae
Plant type: shrub
USDA hardiness zones: 8B through 10 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 8: year round
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Planting month for zone 10: year round
Origin: native to Florida
Uses: mass planting; foundation; superior hedge
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 5 to 12 feet
Spread: 3 to 6 feet
Plant habit: round
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: obovate
Leaf venation: pinnate

Figure 1. Boxthorn.
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
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: summer flowering; pleasant fragrance

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: black
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

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

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: poor
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: long-term health usually not affected by pests
Use and Management

Boxthorn works well as a sheared hedge, barrier, or foundation shrub. Only one pruning is needed each year once the plant has reached the desired height. Tolerant of most well-drained soils, Boxthorn needs regular watering until established. Although Boxthorn will grow in shade, it has more compact, dense growth in full sun. The plant is not widely available, perhaps due to its slow growth rate.

The cultivars ‘Compacta’ and `Nana’ have dwarf growth habits.

Propagation is by seeds or cuttings.

Pest problems include scales, white-flies, sooty-mold, thrips, mites, and soil nematodes.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.