



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## ***Citharexylum fruticosum***<sup>1</sup>

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### **Introduction**

Normally seen as a shrub, Fiddlewood can grow to about 40 feet tall in its native habitat in south Florida (Fig. 1). The largest known specimen is in Dade County, Florida. Leaves are unusually glossy with smooth margins and a distinctive bowed venation pattern. The plant produces several trunks which if left untrained, eventually gives rise to a multi-stemmed shrub or small tree. Small, white showy flowers produced in the summer months contrast nicely with the shiny foliage. Young plants can be upright and rounded; older specimens develop a rounded vase form with lower branches removed.

### **General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Citharexylum fruticosum*

**Pronunciation:** sith-ar-RECKS-sil-lum froo-tick-OH-sum

**Common name(s):** Fiddlewood

**Family:** *Verbenaceae*

**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; hedge; screen; near a deck or patio; espalier; 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); 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

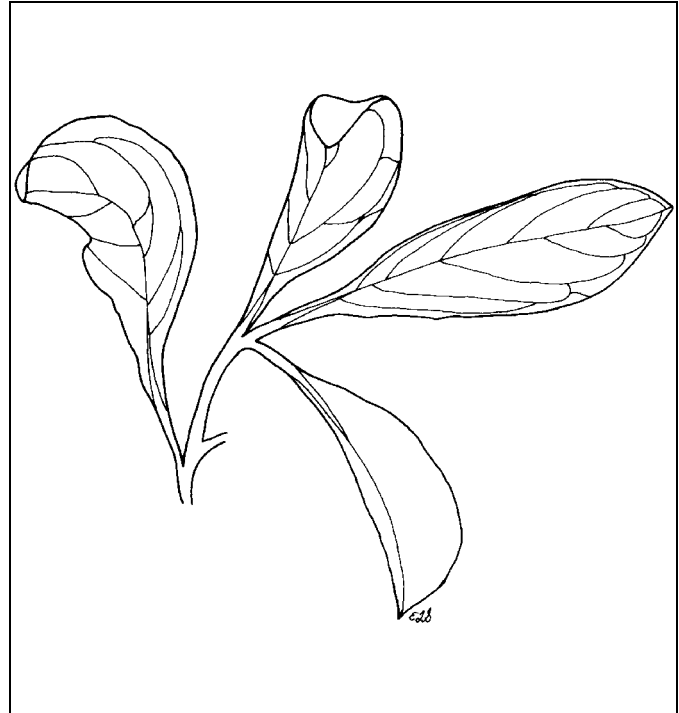


Figure 1. Fiddlewood.

### **Description**

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 8 to 15 feet

**Plant habit:** oval

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Foliage**

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** entire
- Leaf shape:** spatulate
- Leaf venation:** pinnate
- Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

- Flower color:** white
- Flower characteristic:** flowers in summer months

**Fruit**

- Fruit shape:** round
- Fruit length:** less than .5 inch
- Fruit cover:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** yellow; black

**Fruit characteristic:** showy

**Trunk and Branches**

- Trunk/bark/branches:** not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk
- Current year stem/twig color:** green
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

**Culture**

- Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun
- Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;
- Drought tolerance:** high
- Soil salt tolerances:** moderate
- Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

## Other

**Roots:** not applicable

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

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

## Use and Management

Fiddlewood is most useful planted 6 to 8 feet apart as a screen or hedge plant along a property line. Its large size makes it suited for a tall hedge. The canopy on shade-grown plants becomes thin and irregular; those in full sun remain dense and cast deep shade in a small area. Fiddlewood makes a nice patio tree planted in the shade of pines or other tall trees. It will also be useful for planting in parking lot buffer strips, along highways and in other draughty sites receiving little if any irrigation once established.

Fiddlewood is tolerant of sandy, dry soil and adapts to a wide range of soil pH including alkaline. Moderate salt tolerance allows planting near the beach.

### Pests and Diseases

Few insects or diseases bother Fiddlewood.