

Cooperative Extension Service Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Psychotria nervosa¹

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Introduction

Psychotria nervosa is a Florida native shrub that gets its common name from the small, red, ellipsoid fruit it produces (Fig. 1). Fruit resembles the true coffee bean. The leaves of this plant are generally 6-inches-long and are narrowly obovate in shape. These glossy green leaves are puckered with impressed veins on the upper surfaces of the leaf blades, and there is pubescence along the veins on the leaf undersides. The shiny, dark green foliage gives a rich texture to any landscape. The small, white inflorescence occurs terminally on the branchlets during the warm months of the year. Each flower is a sessile or stalked, open, short cyme.

General Information

Scientific name: *Psychotria nervosa* Pronunciation: sye-koe-TREE-yuh ner-VOE-suh Common name(s): Wild-Coffee Family: *Rubiaceae* Plant type: shrub USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2) Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round Origin: native to Florida Uses: specimen; hedge; espalier; foundation; border; mass planting Availablity: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 4 to 10 feet

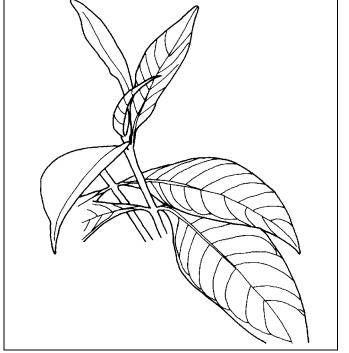


Figure 1. Wild-Coffee.

Spread: 4 to 8 feet Plant habit: round Plant density: moderate Growth rate: moderate Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite Leaf type: simple Leaf margin: entire Leaf shape: elliptic (oval) 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: spring flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval Fruit length: less than .5 inch Fruit cover: fleshy Fruit color: red Fruit characteristic: attracts birds

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: medium

Culture

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

This 4- to 10-foot-tall plant may be used in the landscape as a specimen or foundation plant and is very effective when planted in mass. It stays relatively small in the sun and takes to clipping quite nicely. It makes a nice base or background plant for a shrub border. Birds and other wildlife are often associated with this plant for the fruit it produces.

Wild-Coffee is a moderately drought tolerant plant that will perform well in a partial shade or full shade location in the landscape. Plants in the full sun often have chlorotic foliage. A plant in the full shade can grow into a small tree with an open canopy. It is very cold tender and should be protected if grown north of hardiness zone 10b. This plant will grow on any welldrained soil.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.