Schinus terebinthifolius

Edward F. Gilman

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
**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  

**Invasive potential:** potentially invasive  
**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

**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

**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.

**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