

## ***Breynia disticha* Snowbush<sup>1</sup>**

Edward F. Gilman<sup>2</sup>

### **Introduction**

Snowbush is a rounded shrub that is used primarily for its attractive foliage (Fig. 1). This 5- to 8-foot-tall, vase-shaped to rounded plant has variegated leaves with white, green and red coloration. Plants appear to differ in foliage coloration with some showing almost whitish new growth and others with a white and green variegation. The simple leaves are somewhat two-ranked and could appear to be pinnately compound at first glance. The red branches of this shrub are slender, wiry and appear to zig-zag. Snowbush has green, petal-less flowers that occur in axillary clusters on long peduncles; the flowers are mostly inconspicuous due to the striking foliage. The fruits are red berries that are 3/8 inch wide.



**Figure 1.** Snowbush.

### **General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Breynia disticha*

**Pronunciation:** BRAY-nee-uh DISS-stick-uh

**Common name(s):** Snowbush

**Family:** *Euphorbiaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub

1. This document is FPS73, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date October 1, 1999. Reviewed May 1, 2007. Visit the EDIS Web Site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A. & M. University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Larry Arrington, Dean



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** specimen; superior hedge; suitable for growing indoors; border; foundation; mass planting; cascading down a wall

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

### Description

**Height:** 5 to 8 feet

**Spread:** 4 to 7 feet

**Plant habit:** round

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate; obovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** purple or red; variegated; pink

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristic:** summer flowering; fall flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch

**Fruit cover:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** unknown

**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy

**Current year stem/twig color:** reddish

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

### Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun

**Soil tolerances:** acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam;

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** poor

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

### Other

**Roots:** sprouts from roots or lower trunk

**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:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

### Use and Management

This shrub may be used as a specimen and accent, and it also forms a nice hedge. Given enough room to expand its canopy, a single, unpruned specimen forms an attractive vase shape. It can also

make for an accent in a shrub border. Branches are flexible enough to drape over a wall.

Snowbush will grow well on a wide range of soils but requires a full sun position in the landscape to maintain dense growth. This plant is tolerant of light, sandy soils but will not tolerate salt. Vigorous growth with regular, light fertilizer applications allows the new foliage to show its true charm.

Snowbush may be propagated by cuttings and sucker divisions.

### Pests and Diseases

Although caterpillars and mites may be troublesome pests for Snowbush, this plant is not susceptible to any major diseases.