

***Citharexylum fruticosum* Fiddlewood¹**

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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



Figure 1. Fiddlewood

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 fo median strip plantings in the highway; screen; border

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Description

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 8 to 15 feet

Plant habit: oval

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

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

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: spatulate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

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.