Eugenia Uniflora Surinam Cherry

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

Surinam Cherry is an excellent shrub for screens or hedges, with smooth, shiny, aromatic leaves which are bright red when young. This lends a reddish cast to a clipped hedge during the growing season. The small thin leaves allow the plant to be sheared easily, and it is often used as a hedge. The plant remains dense all the way to the ground if the top of the hedge is clipped so it stays slightly narrower than the bottom. The small, fragrant, white flowers are followed by one-inch diameter, tasty, ribbed, red berries which are unusually high in vitamin C.

General Information

Scientific name: Eugenia uniflora
Pronunciation: yoo-JEE-nee-uh yoo-nif-FLOR-uh
Common name(s): Surinam Cherry
Family: Myrtaceae
Plant type: 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: fruit; superior hedge; container or above-ground planter; trained as a standard; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; border
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 8 to 20 feet
Spread: 6 to 15 feet
Plant habit: oval
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: fine

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.
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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foliage</th>
<th>Fruit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leaf arrangement:</strong> opposite/subopposite</td>
<td><strong>Fruit shape:</strong> round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leaf type:</strong> simple</td>
<td><strong>Fruit length:</strong> less than .5 inch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leaf margin:</strong> entire</td>
<td><strong>Fruit cover:</strong> fleshy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leaf shape:</strong> ovate</td>
<td><strong>Fruit color:</strong> orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leaf venation:</strong> pinnate</td>
<td><strong>Fruit characteristic:</strong> suited for human consumption; attracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leaf type and persistence:</strong> fragrant</td>
<td>birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leaf blade length:</strong> less than 2 inches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leaf color:</strong> purple or red</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall color:</strong> no fall color change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall characteristic:</strong> not showy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall characteristic:</strong> not showy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flower</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flower color:</strong> white</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flower characteristic:</strong> pleasant fragrance; spring flowering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trunk and Branches**

- **Trunk/bark/branches:** no thorns; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
- **Current year stem/twig color:** reddish
- **Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

**Culture**

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

Archival copy: for current recommendations see http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu or your local extension office.
**Eugenia Uniflora Surinam Cherry**

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

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** poor

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** potentially invasive

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

**Use and Management**

Growing best in full sun and rapidly-draining soil, Surinam Cherry has interesting tan-colored, thin, peeling bark and multiple stems, making it a good candidate for training into a small tree for use as a specimen tree. Unfortunately, it is seldom grown in this manner. The natural habit of the plant is an upright spreading form, similar to Crape Myrtle. Space from two to five feet apart to form a hedge or screen planting.

There are many *Eugenia* species with a range of mature heights and sizes.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Surinam Cherry is bothered by scale and caterpillars.

**Pests and Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern.