

lot, increases in the square feet occupied by buildings on the lot, and in the general improvement in

the appearance of the landscape plantings and lawns.

INTRODUCTION OF WILLARDIA SCHIEDEANA TO SOUTH FLORIDA AS A NEW, ORNAMENTAL FLOWERING TREE

CARL E. GERICKE

Gericke Industries, Inc.
Fort Lauderdale

During the early part of 25 years of travel to the North Coast of the Republic of Honduras, specifically to Trujillo, an attractive bloom that I had not seen before was observed on three trees in a street of that city. Some seed from these trees were brought to my home in Fort Lauderdale, where they were propagated and set out. The original seedling, planted in the front yard, is now approximately 20 years old and the following observations are derived from it and successive seedlings. During this period it was referred to as our "Trujillo tree".

In attempting to provide an identification for this species, local nurserymen could not provide one. Following a recommendation, it was taken to the Univ. of Miami where a tentative identification by scientists there as *Bolusanthus speciosus* was made. However, comparison with nursery specimens of *Bolusanthus speciosus* (of African origin) did not match the Honduran species at hand. Accordingly, flower, leaf and seed specimens were taken to Mr. George Avery, botanist at Fairchild Tropical Garden, Miami, Fla. in 1968. Since it was unknown to him, he sent the specimens to the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University where the staff were likewise unable to identify it. From there the specimens were sent to the Smithsonian Institution where Miss Velve Rudd finally identified it as *Willardia Schiedeana* (Schlect) Hermann from Southern Mexico. Their comment was that "it is new all the way down the line".

This species has a growth habit that should recommend it for landscaping use. It is smooth barked and tends to branch fairly soon so as to make a fairly broad canopy. It makes a fast growth in its early years and levels off at 20 to 30 ft. after about twenty years. Apparently it prefers a soil reaction well on the acid side since the trees grow luxuriantly on high, sandy soil of pinelands while

in calcerous soil at Fairchild Garden their seedling did not survive. The soil pH in the first foot level near the original seedling was 6.4 while the second foot level was 5.7. Near a younger seedling that was in good health the first foot level gave a soil pH of 6.2 while the second foot level gave a reaction of 5.4. Seedlings given to a nurseryman in Pompano Beach, however, remained in a stunted, chlorotic condition. The soil reaction in the first foot sample was 7.6.

The tree has soft white wood similar to a poinciana. The branches grow out horizontally, are quite supple and tend to hang down on the ends like a weeping willow or birch. The leaves are typically legume in form (very much resembling a black locust) being pinnate, about 4 inches long, and have a bright green or emerald tint. The leaves fall during June or the first part of July but the tree refoliates completely within a week or ten days.

At the Fort Lauderdale location the tree usually flowers during the first two weeks in September and will carry a bloom that covers approximately 50% of the canopy for a period of around two weeks because of the occurrence of a continuing bloom and providing the weather stays dry. However, if a heavy rain falls during the height of the blooming period, a secondary bloom usually appears again during approximately the first week in October, but in somewhat lesser volume. The flowers come very close to being like that of a lilac in color, size and appearance but the approximately 4 inch raceme is pendant instead of upright. Each floweret is about a half inch in size. The bloom is borne on the ends of the twigs.

The leguminous type seed pods are about 2 to 4 inches in length, very flat and contain 1 to 3 very flat round seeds about 3/8 inch in diameter. The seed requires close to 6 months to reach full maturity, at which time the seed pod dries and falls from the tree. Since the leaves and the seed pod are so finely textured, the resulting debris when these fall is very inconspicuous so that there is no clean-up problem. The seed germinates rap-

idly and with ordinary care will produce plants large enough to transplant in 12 to 18 months time.

The tree tends to form sharp-angled crotches, but the ends of the "crease" seem to be well reinforced. This tree survived the full force winds of hurricane Cleo in 1964 with very little damage while a nearby African mahogany tree, 65 ft. in height and a 27 inch basal diameter in a much more protected spot was blown over. The supple

limbs of the Willardia tend to streamline in heavy wind like coconut palm fronds do.

We have noticed that bird life seem to like to use the tree. Mocking birds have been observed floundering among rain laden leaves as if they were taking a shower bath. Yellow-shafted flickers dip into occasional pools of water in a deep crotch. Other birds seem to feel at home on the smooth somewhat horizontal branches.

EXTENDING A HELPING HAND

G. S. SMITH

Extension Specialist
IFAS, Ornamental Horticulture
Gainesville

G. S. Smith

G. S. Smith, State Extension Spec.
Ornamental Horticulture

"Dear Florida Gardener:

One of the most extensive, objective and up-to-date sources of gardening information is the Florida Cooperative Extension Service.

The Extension Service is the off-campus educational arm of your University of Florida. Its basic purpose is to supply you, the consumer, with the latest practical and scientific knowledge on a particular subject. Extension is not a program limited to technology or production problems in commercial agriculture. Rather, it "extends a helping hand" to all who request assistance. Major emphasis is on helping people, in this instance, making gardening more enjoyable and more meaningful!

The Cooperative Extension Service has personnel working in every Florida county. These specialists live in and are part of their communities and are responsible for getting scientific methods and new knowledge to county residents. Information is distributed through mass media—newspapers, radio, TV—through meetings, workshops, tours, demonstrations, conferences, and sometimes personal visits. Many requests are answered by telephone and/or letter.

If you want the latest information on gardening, call, write, or visit your County Extension Service. They are listed in your phone book under County Government. The specialist handling Ornamental Horticulture in your county is:_____.

Yours for a more beautiful Florida,

Each year we mail thousands of letters like this to Florida residents who request information on gardening in this horticultural paradise.

But who are *we* and what do *we* do? We are the state and county personnel of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service, and if you don't know who we are and what we do, then you're missing out on one of the most extensive sources of gardening information in the country.

Extension History

Perhaps you have heard of the Extension Service. It has been around a long time. The official Extension Service began in 1914 with passage of the Smith-Lever Act. This Act established a nationwide system, subject to state variation, by which practical information related to agriculture and home economics could be transmitted from university researchers directly to the people of Florida. Florida participation resulted from acceptance of this Act and was formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding between the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the University of Florida, the institution established by the State Legislature as the combined State University and Land-Grant College.

Extension initially and still is a main functional part of the University of Florida as is research and teaching. In fact, the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is divided into these three areas of responsibility. Research is conducted on campus by faculty in the Experiment Station and at the branch research facilities such