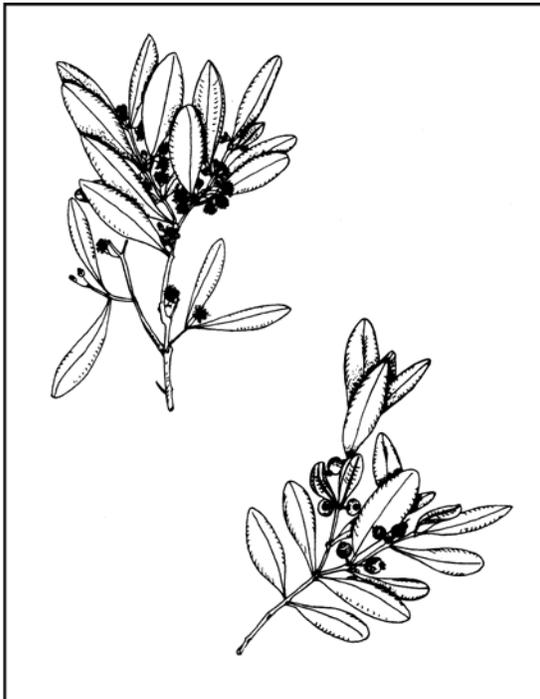


***Eugenia foetida* Pers.**  
MYRTACEAE

boxleaf stopper

Synonyms: *Eugenia buxifolia* (Sw.) Willd.  
*Eugenia myrtoides* Poir.  
*Myrtus axillaries* Poiret in Lam.  
*Myrtus poiretii* Sprengl  
*Eugenia triplinervia* O. Berg.  
*Eugenia lateriflora* sensu Griseb.



**General Description.**—Boxleaf stopper is also known as Spanish stopper, gurgeon stopper, stopper bush, white wadding, anguila, hoja menuda, escobón, pico de paloma, guairaje, bois petites feuilles. It is an upright, evergreen shrub or small tree sometimes reaching 10 m in height and 12.5 cm in diameter at breast height. There is usually a single stem from the ground, but it may branch near the ground. The stems and branches are slender with gray, smooth to lightly fissured or platy bark. The inner bark is pink and slightly bitter. The sapwood is light brown, and the heartwood is dark reddish brown. The wood is hard, heavy, and fine-grained. This deep-rooted species has a tap and lateral root system of slender, flexible to moderately stiff brown roots. The paired, leathery, green to dark green leaves are obovate or oblanceolate 2 to 5 cm long and have a 1.5 to 3 mm petiole and usually have a rounded

tip. The foliage, especially when crushed, emits a mild, offensive, skunk-like odor. Small, four-petaled, white flowers are grouped in few-flowered, axillary racemes. Fruits are black globose berries 4 to 7 mm in diameter with one or two small seeds (Howard 1989, Liogier 1994, Little and others 1974).

**Range.**—Boxleaf stopper is native to Florida, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Hispaniola, Cuba, Anguilla, St. Martin, St. Barts, Netherlands Antillies, Yucatan in Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala (Howard 1989, Liogier 1994, Little and others 1974). The species has not been reported to have naturalized outside its native range.

**Ecology.**—Boxleaf stopper most frequently grows in areas underlain by limestone rock, usually on ridges and hill sides. It grows on clay and courser-textured soils, rocky rubble, and often directly into cracks in fractured rock. The species also occurs on sandy flats behind beaches. In Florida, it grows on hammocks near the coast and on pinelands in the Lower Keys (Nelson 1996). Elevations vary from near sea level to about 100 m. Mean annual rainfall of the native range in Puerto Rico ranges from about 750 and 1700 mm (author's observation, Little and others 1974). The species is drought tolerant (Gilman 1999). Although boxleaf stopper eventually reaches the stature of a small tree on favorable sites, much of its habitat is so difficult that the plant completes its life cycle in sizes (2 to 5 m in height) usually associated with shrubs. The species is moderately intolerant of shade, growing in the understory, as an intermediate or codominant in low-basal area, short-statured, dry forests.

**Reproduction.**—Flowering of boxleaf stopper in Puerto Rico is reported to occur in spring and summer (Little and others 1974). It flowers in the summer in Florida (Gilman 1999). Fresh fruits

collected in Puerto Rico averaged  $0.181 \pm 0.032$ . Air-dried seeds separated from them averaged 14,900 seeds/kg. Placed in moist potting mix, 51 percent germinated beginning 69 days after sowing. The new seedlings grow slowly. In the wild, seeds are dispersed by birds. Seedlings and saplings are widely scattered to relatively common.

**Growth and Management.**—The growth rate of boxleaf stopper is moderate to slow, depending on habitat. Apparently, it is relatively long lived (a few decades). Potted stock is available from nurseries for planting. Although expensive for wildland plantings, this may be the best way to establish them in order to get them above competing weeds and grass. Ornamental plants may be pruned into hedges or forced to single-stemmed trees (Gilman 1999). Because they are relatively slow growing and not aggressive invaders, control of the species in natural stands should not be necessary.

**Benefits.**—Boxleaf stopper protects the soil, furnishes cover for wildlife, and contributes to the aesthetics of the forest. Aromatic compounds released from the leaves of this species apparently are responsible for the slight musky smell present in forests in Puerto Rico where it is common. Foliage of the species is not eaten by Key deer (*Odocoileus virginianus clavium*) (Schaus and others 2003) and probably is avoided by other ruminant herbivores. Although small, the fruits are edible to humans, and birds consume them when available. Boxleaf stopper is recommended and used for screens, hedges, parking lot, yard, and street trees in Florida (Gilman 1999).

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