

***Forestiera segregata* (Jacq.) Krug & Urban**  
OLEACEAE

Florida privet

Synonyms: *Myrica segregata* Jacq.  
*Adelia porulosa* Michx.  
*Forestiera porulosa* (Michx.) Poir.  
*Adelia segregata* (Jacq.) O. Kuntze  
*Adelia pinetorum* Small  
*Forestiera cassinoides* Poir.



**General Description.**—Florida privet, also known as Florida swamp privet, wild olive, and ink-bush, is a semideciduous shrub or small tree to 7 m in height. The plant is supported by a weak taproot and more robust, tan-colored lateral roots. The branches are slender. The opposite leaves have short petioles, 1 to 6 mm long, and narrowly elliptic to obovate blades, 1 to 7 cm long, with entire margins. Tiny, greenish-yellow flowers are borne in clusters at the leaf axils. The fruits are slightly curved, ovoid, black drupes, 6 to 10 mm long, that have a bitter, unpleasant flavor and stain cloth and skin. Each contains one greenish-yellow seed (Howard 1989, Liogier 1995, Long and Lakela 1976, Nelson 1996).

**Range.**—Florida privet is native to Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, the Bahamas, the Greater Antilles, the Cayman Islands and Anguilla,

Barbuda, Antigua, La Désirade, and Marie Galante in the Lesser Antilles (Howard 1989, Liogier 1995, National Trust for the Cayman Islands 2002, Natural Resources Conservation Service 2002). Long and Lakela (1976) identify two varieties: var. *segregata* with glabrous stems and leaf blades more than 3 cm long in Florida and Georgia, and var. *pinetorum*, which has puberulent stems and leaf blades 1 to 3 cm long in South Florida.

**Ecology.**—Florida privet grows best in partial shade (Horticopia 2002). It is tolerant of drought, salt, and alkaline soils (University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service 2002). Florida privet competes well with shrubs and herbs and grows in hammocks and pinelands in Florida (Long and Lakela 1976). In Puerto Rico and other Caribbean Islands, it is most frequently seen in dry forests in limestone areas near the coast. The species is rare in the United States and has become a candidate for Federal listing (Everglades Mitigation Bank 2002).

**Reproduction.**—In Florida, Florida privet flowers in the spring (Nelson 1996). It is insect pollinated. A collection of fruits from Puerto Rico weighed an average of  $0.1209 \pm 0.0035$  g/fruit. Air-dried seeds cleaned from them weighed an average of  $0.0359 \pm 0.0006$  g/seed or 27,900 seeds/kg. Sown in moist potting mix, they began germinating in 7 days and completed 89 percent germination in 49 days (author's observation). The seeds are dispersed by birds that eat the fruits. Seedlings do not occur in large numbers.

**Growth and Management.**—Florida privet grows slowly in the early seedling stage but later accelerates so that seedlings are ready to transplant at the end of 1 year. Nursery production is normally from seed. Wildlings of all sizes can be successfully transplanted (Workman 1980). Beyond the seedling stage, it has a moderate growth rate (University of Florida Cooperative

Extension Service 2002). The largest Florida privet recorded measures 20.2 cm diameter at breast height and 5.5 m in height (American Forests 2002).

**Benefits.**—Florida privet is recommended for xeriscape (unwatered) landscaping (South Florida Water Management District 2001) and is available through a number of commercial nurseries. It is useful for hedges and foundation and specimen plantings. Warblers, bluebirds, mockingbirds, and vireos feed upon the fruits in South Florida (Broschat and Verkade 2002, Cowley 2002). Honeybees, butterflies, and other insects are attracted to the flowers for the nectar (Workman 1980).

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