

***Schaefferia frutescens* Jacq.**  
CELASTRACEAE

Florida-boxwood

Synonyms: *Schaefferia completa* Sw.  
*Schaefferia frutescens* Jacq. var. *buxifolia* DC.  
*Schaefferia buxifolia* (DC.) Nutt.



**General Description.**—Florida-boxwood is a shrub or occasionally a small tree. Florida-boxwood is also known as yellowwood, jiga, cafeillo, cabra cimarrona, amansa, guapo, jasmín, limoncillo, fruta de paloma, petit bois blanc, bois capable, petit garcon, and merisier (Little and others 1974). It has multiple stems, branching near the base, or a single stem, and usually reaches heights of 4 to 5 m. However, the Florida record tree measures 8 m in height and 18 cm diameter at breast height (Champion Tree Project 2001). The bark is light gray and nearly smooth, becoming increasingly furrowed in older shrubs and trees. The inner bark is light yellow. The roots are bright orange. There is a weak taproot supporting robust and stiff lateral roots and fine 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> order roots. Twigs of Florida-boxwood are slender, slightly angled, hairless and pale yellow-green when young, turning light gray with age. The branch habit is upright to partially drooping. The leaves are yellow-green, alternate, simple, leathery, and elliptic to oval shaped with pointed

ends. They measure 4 to 7 cm in length and 1.2 to 2.5 cm in width. The flowers are small, pale green or greenish-yellow or greenish-white, and borne in small clusters at the leaf axiles. The fruits that arise from them are spherical to ovoid, 4 to 8 mm long, and red or orange-red. Each fruit contains two light-brown seeds (Howard 1989, Little and others 1974, Liogier 1994, Nelson 1996).

**Range.**—Florida-boxwood is native to southern Florida, the Bahamas, the West Indies, Mexico through Central America, Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador (Liogier 1994). It is not known to have naturalized outside its native range.

**Ecology.**—Florida-boxwood grows in soils ranging from sandy to clayey and from mildly alkaline to moderately acid derived from both sedimentary and igneous rocks. In Puerto Rico, the species inhabits areas receiving from 750 to about 1700 mm of mean annual precipitation and from near sea level to 600 m in elevation. In the upper range of rainfall, it grows only on excessively drained sites. Florida-boxwood is moderately shade tolerant. It is usually found in the understory of low-density forest where it grows well and reproduces. After the forest overstory is removed, Florida-boxwood grows well in full sun. In Puerto Rico, the species grows in remnant dry and moist forests and middle and late secondary forests. In Florida, it grows in tidewater areas and hammocks. The species is drought tolerant and somewhat resistant to soil salinity (Gilman 1999). Although the species is common in Puerto Rico and in much of its range, it is considered endangered in natural environments in Florida (Institute of Systematic Botany 2001).

**Reproduction.**—Florida-boxwood flowers in March through May in Florida (Nelson 1996). Fruits collected in Puerto Rico averaged  $0.142 \pm 0.002$  g/fruit. Seeds separated from them averaged  $0.011 \pm 0.000$  g/seed or 98,000 seeds/kg. Twenty-one percent of these seeds germinated between 62 and 93 days of sowing in moist peat. Germination is epigeal. The fruits are apparently eaten and the

seeds dispersed by birds.

**Growth and Management.**—Florida-boxwood is reported to have a high growth rate, withstands heavy pruning, and can be formed into hedges and shaped into small trees (Gilman 1999).

**Benefits.**—Florida-boxwood makes superior quality hedges, screens, and accent plantings. It is also used for reclamation plantings (Gilman 1999). The wood is light brown to yellow, hard and moderately heavy. It has been used in the past for wood engraving (Little and others 1974). It is also used, when available, for carving, for boxes (Gilman 1999), and, to a limited extent, for fuel. The leaves have been used in the past as emergency soap for the body and cloths (Liogier 1990). Almost nothing is known about its forage value except that Key deer (*Odocoileus virginianus clavium*) will not eat it (Schaus and others 2001). Decoctions are used in herbal medicine for colds, flu, and chronic cough, and crushed leaves are used as a soothing bath for skin irritations (Liogier 1990).

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