Identification and Control of Coral Ardisia (*Ardisia crenata*): A Potentially Poisonous Plant.\(^1\)

B. A. Sellers, Sarah Lancaster, K. A. Langeland, J. A. Ferrell, Michael Meisenberg, and J. Walter.\(^2\)

Coral ardisia, also known as coral berry, spice berry, and scratchthroat, was introduced to Florida in the early 1900’s for ornamental purposes (Figure 1). Since then, it has escaped cultivation, and it is found in hardwood hammocks and other moist, natural-wooded areas and grazing lands. Documented herbarium specimens, or preserved plants, have been collected from 19 western and south-central Florida counties (Wunderlin and Hansen, 2004). Coral ardisia is considered invasive by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council and the UF/IFAS Assessment (Fox et al., 2005).

**Identification**

Coral ardisia is an evergreen, sub-shrub that reaches heights of 1.5 to 6 feet. It tends to grow in multi-stemmed clumps. The alternate, waxy leaves are about 8 inches long, and they are dark green above. They are also hairless, with scalloped margins and calluses in the margin notches (Figure 2). Flowers are typically pink to white in stalked axillary clusters, usually drooping below the foliage (Figure 3). The fruit is bright red, globular, and one-seeded, measuring about 0.25 inches in diameter (Figure 4). Berries tend to persist on the plant nearly year-round, and white-berried populations also exist.

![Figure 1. Coral ardisia in a hardwood hammock. Credits: Michael Meisenburg](image)


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Toxicity

Although there is no published literature supporting the theory that coral ardisia is toxic, it is suspected that the berries and/or foliage are poisonous to livestock, pets, and humans. In 2001, 2007, and 2012, the plant was the suspected causal agent for livestock deaths in Florida.

Control

Coral ardisia can be suppressed by using low-volume, foliar applications of 3% v/v (volume to volume) solution of triclopyr ester-containing products (Garlon 4 Ultra, Remedy Ultra, others), 4% triclopyr amine-containing products (Garlon 3A, others), or 1% imazapic-containing products (Impose, Panoramic, Plateau) (Table 1). Basal bark applications with an 18% v/v solution of Garlon 4 or Remedy Ultra in an oil carrier can also suppress the plant. Complete coverage is essential when using foliar application. Do not apply more than 8 quarts of Remedy or Garlon 4 per acre. If applying greater than 2 quarts, then treat no more than 10% of the total grazed area. Since formulations can evaporate when temperatures exceed 90°F, use care when applying high rates of these herbicides. The herbicide Imazapic has been shown to reduce seedling germination within 12 months after application. Regardless of the application method, retreatment will be necessary for complete control. For more information on basal bark applications, visit http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AG245 to read the EDIS publication entitled “Herbicide Application Techniques for Woody Plant Control.”

References and Further Reading


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Table 1. Control of mature and seedling coral ardisia with selected herbicides 12 months after treatment. Adapted from Hutchinson et al. 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active ingredient</th>
<th>Trade names</th>
<th>Rate (% v/v)</th>
<th>Mature plant control (%)</th>
<th>Seedling control (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Triclopyr ester</td>
<td>Garlon 4 Ultra, Remedy Ultra, others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triclopyr amine</td>
<td>Garlon 3A, others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imazapic</td>
<td>Impose, Panoramic, Plateau, others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triclopyr amine + imazapic</td>
<td>Garlon 3 A + Plateau</td>
<td>4 + 1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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