

# *Eugenia foetida* Spanish Stopper<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Spanish Stopper grows in south Florida on limestone soils in hardwood hammocks as an under story tree. However, it is perfectly adapted to more open, sunny locations where it will flourish with little care once it becomes established. Reddish twigs bear tiny green leaves and berries less than 1/4 inch diameter. Several stems arise from the lower part of the tree forming a multiple trunked tree well adapted for many landscapes.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Eugenia foetida*

**Pronunciation:** yoo-JEE-nee-uh FET-tid-uh

**Common name(s):** Spanish Stopper, Box-Leaf Eugenia

**Family:** *Myrtaceae*

**Plant type:** tree

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10 through 11 (Fig. 1)

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** residential street tree; near a deck or patio; superior hedge; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; screen

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant



Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## Description

**Height:** 12 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 8 to 15 feet

**Plant habit:** vase shape; oval

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

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**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** white  
**Flower characteristic:** summer flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round  
**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch  
**Fruit cover:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** red; black  
**Fruit characteristic:** suited for human consumption; attracts birds

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** showy; no thorns  
**Current year stem/twig color:** reddish  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun  
**Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown  
**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

## Other

**Roots:** usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive  
**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

## Use and Management

The smooth, brown to grey, mottled bark and tight canopy of fine-textured leaves makes Spanish Stopper well suited for planting as a specimen in any yard. Old bark exfoliates showing fresh, smooth orange bark below. It is commonly used as a hedge due to the small leaves and branchiness. Trees can be trained in the nursery to one central trunk or allowed and encouraged to develop multiple trunks. They create shade for a patio or deck, but will not grow to the large, often overpowering size of a large tree such as a Fig. They are often used along streets, in highway medians and in parking lots because they adapt to small soil spaces and do not become very large. Street and parking lot trees are often specified to have one trunk to allow for vehicle clearance beneath the crown.

Multiple trunked trees are often specified for specimen planting so the beautiful bark can be displayed. Plants are adapted to most soils from acidic to alkaline. Once they are established in the landscape, they require little care.

## Pest and Diseases

There are no major problems growing this tree.