

Myrcianthes fragrans Simpson's Stopper, Twinberry¹

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Introduction

This member of the eucalyptus family is an attractive, hardy tropical. It was once known as *Eugenia simpsonii*. It may be a large shrub or small tree and can reach a height of 20 feet with a 15-foot spread. The tiny, deep green leaves contain aromatic oils with the fragrance of nutmeg. They grow densely, when in full sun, on the smooth-barked branches. When this plant is grown in shade, the foliage becomes less dense, and the trunk displays its attractive, smooth, exfoliating bark. Twinberry has fragrant, white flowers that grow in long panicles which occur periodically throughout the year. These flowers then develop into attractive, red berries that are edible. The flowers attract many species of butterflies, and the fruits are appealing to birds, especially the state bird of Florida, the mockingbird.

General Information

Scientific name: *Myrcianthes fragrans*

Pronunciation: mer-see-ANTH-eez FRAY-granz

Common name(s): Simpson's stopper, twinberry

Family: *Myrtaceae*

Plant type: tree

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 1)

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet);

large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet); trained as a standard; mass planting; screen; attracts butterflies

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 20 to 30 feet

Spread: 15 to 20 feet

Plant habit: round



Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

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Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: fragrant
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: pleasant fragrance; flowers periodically throughout the year

Fruit

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

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; no thorns; showy
Current year stem/twig color: reddish
Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

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

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Twinberry performs well with little or no irrigation once it becomes established. It is useful in roadway medians, along unmaintained highways or in buffer strips around parking lots. It can be trimmed into a nice, multi-trunked small tree for use near a deck or patio to provide shade to a small area. This configuration shows off the bark nicely.

Twinberry can grow in full sun or deep shade and is most useful where the soils contain shell, marl, or lime rock (alkaline soils). This plant will tolerate wet soils but is also drought tolerant. It shears well, has a high salt tolerance, and is hardy to about 25°F. Its native habitat in Florida is the coastal upland forests with sandy soil containing shells and a neutral to slightly alkaline pH.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.