Introduction
Normally seen as a shrub, fiddlewood can grow to about 40 feet tall in its native habitat in south Florida (Fig. 1). The largest known specimen is in Dade County, FL. Leaves are unusually glossy with smooth margins and a distinctive bowed venation pattern. The plant produces several trunks which if left untrained, eventually gives rise to a multi-stemmed shrub or small tree. Small, white showy flowers produced in the summer months contrast nicely with the shiny foliage. Young plants can be upright and rounded; older specimens develop a rounded vase form with lower branches removed.

General Information
Scientific name: *Citharexylum fruticosum*

Pronunciation: sith-ar-RECKS-sil-lum froo-tick-OH-sum

Common name(s): fiddlewood

Family: Verbenaceae

Plant type: tree

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: reclamation plant; hedge; screen; near a deck or patio; espalier; 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); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or median strip plantings in the highway; screen; border

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

Figure 1. Fiddlewood.
Credits: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

---


2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county’s UF/IFAS Extension office.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.
Description
Height: 15 to 25 feet
Spread: 8 to 15 feet
Plant habit: oval
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: slow
Texture: medium

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: spatulate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: flowers in summer months

Fruit
Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: yellow; black
Fruit characteristic: showy

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

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

Other
Roots: not applicable
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: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management
Fiddlewood is most useful planted 6 to 8 feet apart as a screen or hedge plant along a property line. Its large size makes it suited for a tall hedge. The canopy on shade-grown plants becomes thin and irregular; those in full sun remain dense and cast deep shade in a small area. Fiddlewood makes a nice patio tree planted in the shade of pines or other tall trees. It will also be useful for planting in parking lot buffer strips, along highways and in other drafty sites receiving little if any irrigation once established.

Fiddlewood is tolerant of sandy, dry soil and adapts to a wide range of soil pH including alkaline. Moderate salt tolerance allows planting near the beach.

Pests and Diseases
Few insects or diseases bother fiddlewood.