Lysiloma bahamensis: Wild-Tamarind

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

Introduction
Cuban Tamarind is native to South Florida and grows moderately fast, up to 40 to 60 feet tall and 45 feet wide, its slender, short trunk topped with long, somewhat arching branches forming an umbrella-like silhouette. The pale green, pinnately compound, fern-like leaves are a showy red when young and make a striking contrast, the new and older growth appearing together. Developing into a more open tree with age, Cuban Tamarind makes an ideal shade, park, or seaside planting.

General Information
Scientific name: Lysiloma bahamensis
Pronunciation: lye-sih-LOE-muh bah-hah-MEN-sis
Common name(s): Wild-Tamarind, Bahama Lysiloma
Family: Leguminosae
USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Origin: native to North America
Invasive potential: little invasive potential
Uses: reclamation; street without sidewalk; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; shade; highway median; specimen; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; container or planter
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

Description
Height: 40 to 60 feet
Spread: 30 to 45 feet
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Crown uniformity: irregular
Crown shape: vase, weeping
Crown density: open
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: fine

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: bipinnately compound, even-pinnately compound
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: obovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Figure 3. Foliage

Flower
Flower color: white/cream/gray
Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit
Fruit shape: pod or pod-like, elongated
Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: green
Current year twig thickness: thin, medium
Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture
Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: high

Other
Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: no
Outstanding tree: yes
Ozone sensitivity: unknown
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown
Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management
Cities have planted Cuban and Wild Tamarind ( *Lysiloma latisiliqua* ) along streets with good success. They are probably well suited for this use. Codominant stems form very low on the trunk without proper pruning and training, and branches will droop toward the ground. Specify trees for planting along streets and in parking lots that have a clear trunk to about five feet or more to help avoid this problem. If large branches are allowed to develop below this point, the tree could become disfigured as these branches have to be removed in the future to allow for passage of vehicles and pedestrians. Locate the first permanent branch 6 (preferably 10) or more feet from the ground to allow for clearance. Low branches can be left on the tree if it will be planted in a yard, park or other location where vehicle clearance is not a concern.

Major branches often develop embedded or included bark as they grow at the same rate as the trunk. They often grow to about the same size as the trunk. This does not appear to be a problem on small trees but could encourage branch breakage as the tree grows older. Try to keep the major branches from growing larger than about two-thirds the diameter of the trunk.

The small, white flowers appear in late spring as fuzzy globes and are followed by four to six-inch-long, thin, flattened, red/brown seedpods which disperse their brown seeds in fall.

Cuban Tamarind should be grown in full sun or partial shade on rich, well-drained soil and is sensitive to freezing weather. The tree is also highly drought- and salt-tolerant making it ideal for use in seaside landscapes.

Propagation is by seed.
**Pests**
Stem galls.

**Diseases**
Rust diseases.