

# Byrsonima lucida Locustberry<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

This low, spreading, evergreen shrub has a unique character (Fig. 1). In the pinelands of Florida where nutrients are not abundant, it will grow to a height of 1 foot. However, it can reach a height of 8 to 10 feet in the hammocks where soils are richer. The branching habit of the locustberry is quite irregular, and the shrub is often a host to epiphytes. The spring flowers of this plant occur in clusters and change colors with time. These flowers turn from white to pink and from pink to crimson. The beautiful colors of the flowers attract different species of butterflies. The oil glands on the underside of the petals also change color and turn from green to yellow.

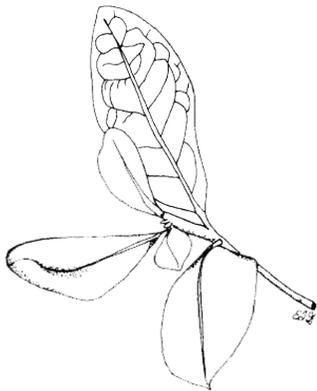


Figure 1. Locustberry.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Byrsonima lucida*

**Pronunciation:** bur-SO-nim-uh LOO-sid-uh

**Common name(s):** locustberry

**Family:** *Malpighiaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub

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

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

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** reclamation plant; screen; border; attracts butterflies

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



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## Description

**Height:** 12 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 30 feet

**Plant habit:** round

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

1. This document is FPS81, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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.

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** obovate; spatulate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

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

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** pink; yellow

**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering; summer flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch

**Fruit cover:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** green; red

**Fruit characteristic:** attracts birds; persists on the plant

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy

**Current year stem/twig color:** green

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun

**Soil tolerances:** acidic; occasionally wet; slightly alkaline; sand; loam

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Soil salt tolerances:** good

**Plant spacing:** not applicable

## Other

**Roots:** usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## Use and Management

Fruits of the locustberry ripen in the summer and are appealing to mockingbirds and other forms of wildlife. This plant can also take on an oriental or bonsai appearance with the proper pruning.

*Byrsonima lucida* requires a position in the landscape that receives full sun. It is adapted to different, well-drained soils and is very drought tolerant. It is an endangered plant in Florida.

## Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.