

# Capparis cynophallophora Jamaican Caper<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman, Ryan W. Klein, and Gail Hansen<sup>2</sup>

#### Introduction

This 6 to 20 foot-tall, native shrub is an upright to spreading plant that is related to plants producing edible capers. The evergreen leaves of the Jamaica caper are light green above, with fine brown scales below. These glossy, oval leaves are folded together when they first emerge and give the plant's new growth a bronze appearance. The leaves also have a notched tip. Twigs are brownish gray and pubescent. Jamaica caper flowers have very showy, two-inch-long, purple stamens, white anthers, and white petals. The inflorescence is comprised of terminal clusters consisting of 3 to 10 individual flowers. The fruits are 3 to 8 inch long cylindrical pods containing small brown seeds that are embedded in a scarlet pulp.

### **General Information**

Scientific name: Capparis cynophallophora

**Pronunciation:** KAP-ar-riss sin-oh-fal-oh-FOR-uh

**Common name(s):** Jamaican caper

**Family:** Capparidaceae

Plant type: tree

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10 through 11 (Figure 3)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

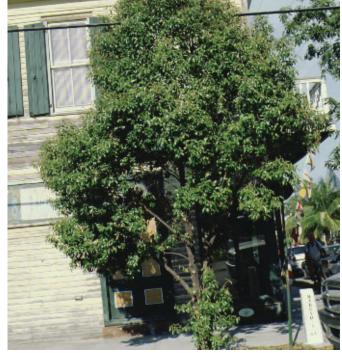


Figure 1. Leaf—Capparis cynophallophora: Jamaican Caper Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

**Origin:** native to Florida

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

**Uses:** near a deck or patio; screen; border; attracts butterflies; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium-sized parking

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lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size)

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 2. Leaf—*Capparis cynophallophora*: Jamaican Caper Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 3. Shaded area represents potential planting range. Credits: undefined

## **Description**

Height: 6 to 15 feet

**Spread:** 8 to 12 feet

**Plant habit:** vase shape

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

### **Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

#### **Flower**

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: spring flowering

#### **Fruit**

Fruit shape: pod or pod-like

Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches

Fruit cover: dry or hard

**Fruit color:** unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

#### **Trunk and Branches**

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

Current year stem/twig color: brown

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

#### **Culture**

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

**Soil tolerances:** acidic; slightly 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: not particularly outstanding

**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the

plant

# **Use and Management**

Jamaica caper can be utilized as an understory tree in the partial shade. Train the plant into a tree by removing low, drooping branches, and heading upright branches to thicken their diameter. It can also be clipped into a hedge or tall screen to block an undesirable view.

Grow *Capparis cynophallophora* in an area that receives full sun to medium shade. This plant performs well in soils with good drainage and can tolerate cold temperatures to 28°F. It is also drought resistant and responds to fertilizer with vigorous growth.

Propagate the Jamaica caper by seeds.

#### **Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.