

# ***Cassia bahamensis* Bahama Cassia<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Introduction**

Bahama cassia (also known as *C. chapmanii*) is a tall upright shrub that may reach a height of 3 to 9 feet. Like many other cassias, this shrub is covered with little yellow flowers in the fall which are quite attractive next to the dark green, compound leaves. Several kinds of butterflies, including the sulfurs, are attracted to these ½ to 1-inch-wide flowers. Bahama cassia is relatively short-lived and may begin to decline after only four or five years. However, this plant often has seedlings popping up nearby. This could be a mixed blessing by providing for a source of new plants and creating a potential weed problem.



**Figure 1. Full Form—*Cassia bahamensis*: Bahama Cassia**  
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



**Figure 2. Leaf—*Cassia bahamensis*: Bahama Cassia**  
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**Figure 3. Flower—*Cassia bahamensis*: Bahama Cassia**  
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Figure 4. Fruit—*Cassia bahamensis*: Bahama Cassia  
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## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Cassia bahamensis*

**Pronunciation:** KASS-ee-uh baw-haw-MEN-sis

**Common name(s):** Bahama cassia, Bahama senna

**Family:** *Leguminosae*

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Figure 5)



Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting range.  
Credits: undefined

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

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Invasive potential:** native plant that often reproduces into nearby landscapes

**Uses:** specimen; screen; border; mass planting; attracts butterflies; 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)

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

## Description

**Height:** 3 to 9 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 10 feet

**Plant habit:** upright; round

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** even-pinnately compound

**Leaf margin:** revolute

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)

**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:** yellow

**Flower characteristic:** fall flowering; winter flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** elongated

**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches

**Fruit cover:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

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

**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

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

## Use and Management

Bahama cassia could be used in the landscape as a specimen planted by itself, or as a screen, hedge, or border. In a sunny location it grows to about 8 feet tall so would make a nice background plant in a shrub border. Allow plenty of room for its rounded, spreading habit of growth. Plants can easily grow to become 6 to 10 feet wide.

In the sun, Bahama cassia will be bushy and seldom exceeds a height of 3 to 5 feet; it will obtain a height of 9 feet in partial shade. This shrub prefers well-drained, acid, sandy soil and is drought tolerant. Prune the plant back to the ground in the spring every few years to rejuvenate it or following a winter with freezing temperatures. Freezing temperature will usually kill all tissue above ground. The

plant often sprouts back quickly in the spring in hardiness zone 9 and 10.

Cassia can be propagated by using seeds or cuttings.

## Pests and Diseases

Bahama cassia is not susceptible to any diseases of major concern. As with other cassias, caterpillars may consume the leaves and flower buds, especially in the fall.