

# Chiococca alba Snowberry<sup>1</sup>

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

## Introduction

*Chiococca alba* is a handsome, low scrambling shrub that can reach a height of 10 feet if given a support to climb upon (Figure 1). The leathery leaves of the snowberry are evergreen, shiny, and dark green in color. White to yellowish, tubular flowers are found in the leaf axil and occur in 3-inch-long racemes or panicles. Each raceme or panicle is tipped with 6 to 8 of the flowers, and these flowers turn from white to yellow with time. The common name used for this shrub refers to the large, ovoid, sparkling white fruits that follow the delightful flowers. This plant may be used as a mounding specimen and is a splendid trellis or espalier subject.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Chiococca alba*

**Pronunciation:** kye-oh-KOE-kuh AL-buh

**Common name(s):** snowberry, milkberry, West Indian milkberry

**Family:** Rubiaceae

**Plant type:** vine

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

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

**Origin:** native to Florida

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

**Uses:** espalier; mass planting; foundation

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



Figure 1. Full Form - *Chiococca alba*: Snowberry

Credits: Edward F. Gilman

## Description

**Height:** depends upon supporting structure

**Spread:** 6 to 10 feet

**Plant habit:** spreading; round

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor; Ryan W. Klein; and Gail Hansen, associate professor; Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.



Figure 2. Leaf - *Chiococca alba*: Snowberry  
Credits: Edward F. Gilman



Figure 3. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** ovate  
**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:** yellow  
**Flower characteristic:** flowers periodically throughout the year

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round  
**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch  
**Fruit cover:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** white  
**Fruit characteristic:** attracts birds

## 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; alkaline; sand; loam  
**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

The snowberry is a shrub that needs a sunny location and well-drained soil. It will grow well on sandy loam soils and can tolerate dry conditions. This plant can be found in or near coastal areas throughout Florida and will usually survive without care.

## Pests and Diseases

Chewing insects may occasionally be a problem for *Chiococca alba*, but none are lethal.