

Eugenia uniflora Surinam Cherry¹

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Surinam Cherry, *Eugenia uniflora* is a FISC Category 1 Invasive plant in Florida. The UF/IFAS Assessment lists it as invasive in south Florida and a species of caution in central and north Florida. Information on this plant is being provided for identification in the landscape to encourage removal and identification at nurseries to discourage purchase.

Introduction

Surinam cherry is an excellent shrub for screens or hedges, with smooth, shiny, aromatic leaves which are bright red when young. This lends a reddish cast to a clipped hedge during the growing season. The small, thin leaves allow the plant to be sheared easily, and it is often used as a hedge. The plant remains dense all the way to the ground if the top of the hedge is clipped so it stays slightly narrower than the bottom. The small, fragrant, white flowers are followed by one-inch diameter, tasty, ribbed, red berries which are unusually high in vitamin C.



Figure 1. Full Form - *Eugenia uniflora*: Surinam cherry
Credits: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

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Figure 2. Leaf and Flower - *Eugenia uniflora*: Surinam cherry
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Figure 3. Fruit - *Eugenia uniflora*: Surinam cherry
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Figure 4. Bark - *Eugenia uniflora*: Surinam cherry
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General Information

Scientific name: *Eugenia uniflora*

Pronunciation: yoo-JEE-nee-uh yoo-nif-FLOR-uh

Common name(s): Surinam cherry

Family: *Myrtaceae*

Plant type: tree

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Figure 5)

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to South America

Invasive potential: Invasive and not recommended by UF/IFAS faculty (reassess in 10 years)

Uses: fruit; superior hedge; container or above-ground planter; trained as a standard; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; border

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 8 to 20 feet

Spread: 6 to 15 feet

Plant habit: oval

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: fragrant

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: purple or red

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: pleasant fragrance; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: orange

Fruit characteristic: suited for human consumption; attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: no thorns; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: reddish

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

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

Growing best in full sun and rapidly-draining soil, Surinam cherry has interesting tan-colored, thin, peeling bark and multiple stems, making it a good candidate for training into a small tree for use as a specimen tree. Unfortunately, it is seldom grown in this manner. The natural habit of the plant is an upright spreading form, similar to crape myrtle. Space from two to five feet apart to form a hedge or screen planting.

There are many *Eugenia* species with a range of mature heights and sizes.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

Surinam cherry is bothered by scale and caterpillars.

No diseases are of major concern.