

Savia bahamensis Maidenbush¹

Edward F. Gilman, Ryan W. Klein, and Gail Hansen²

Introduction

Maidenbush is a small-leaved, compact, native shrub with some resemblance to cocoplum. This 6 to 10 foot tall euphorbia has pretty, oval green leaves that are folded toward each other along the long stems. When the new growth of this plant emerges, it is a bright red color. The fruits and flowers of the maidenbush are not the “stars of the show” but are small and inconspicuous; the foliage is the real attraction. This shrub makes a great specimen plant and is suitable for coastal landscapes.



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



Figure 2. Leaf—*Savia bahamensis*: Maidenbush.
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Savia bahamensis*

Pronunciation: SAY-vee-uh bah-hah-MEN-sis

Common name(s): maidenbush, Bahama maidenbush

Family: *Euphorbiaceae*

Plant type: shrub

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

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year-round

1. This document is FPS536, one of a series of the Department of Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Revised October 2023. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor emeritus; Ryan W. Klein, assistant professor, arboriculture; and Gail Hansen, professor, sustainable landscape design; Department of Environmental Horticulture, 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. Andra Johnson, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.

Origin: native to Florida

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: hedge; specimen; screen

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



Figure 3. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 6 to 10 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: spatulate

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

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: green

Flower characteristic: spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: less than 0.5 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

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: reddish

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full 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

Maidenbush will thrive on dry sandy soils in full or partial sun. Maidenbush is a drought-tolerant plant, but it may be damaged by cold weather in areas north of Vero Beach, FL. Native soil is fairly well drained in the coastal upland plant communities. Soil pH in its native habitat is slightly alkaline or neutral.

Pests and Diseases

There are no major problems growing maidenbush.