

Colubrina arborescens Coffee Colubrina, Wild Coffee¹

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Introduction

Native to south Florida in the coastal upland plant community and the Caribbean Basin, this small tree or large shrub can reach a height of 20 feet or more. Handsome, shiny leaves are borne on thin twigs covered with rust-colored hairs. Hairs occasionally extend onto the underside of leaves. Prominent yellow veins contrast with the dark green leaves. Plants grow in dense clusters in sunny or partially shaded locations.



Figure 1. Leaf - *Colubrina arborescens*: Coffee Colubrina, Wild Coffee
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Full form - *Colubrina arborescens*: Coffee Colubrina, Wild Coffee

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Colubrina arborescens*

Pronunciation: kaw-l-yoo-BRYE-nuh ar-bor-RESS-enz

Common name(s): coffee colubrina, wild coffee

Family: *Rhamnaceae*

Plant type: tree

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

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

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Origin: native to Florida

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: container or above-ground planter; reclamation plant; trained as a standard; hedge; near a deck or patio; specimen; espalier; 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); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); wide tree lawns (> 6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; screen; border

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: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 12 to 20 feet

Plant habit: round; oval

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

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: year-round flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than 1/2 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: black

Fruit characteristic: attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

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

Current year stem/twig color: brown

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; slightly 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: no special winter interest

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

Colubrina makes a good hedge or screen planting due to the dense canopy. Plant on 5 feet centers to establish a solid mass of foliage several years after planting. Single plants can be trained into a small tree by periodically removing lower foliage and branches as the tree grows taller. It will make a nice ornamental next to the patio or deck since the foliage is pretty and the fruit is small. Small fruit also make this plant suitable for planting near a swimming pool.

Soil in its native habitat is well drained and sandy, usually with a slightly alkaline pH. In the Keys, plants grow in porous limestone.

Colubrina elliptica is a similar plant growing in the Florida Keys and the Caribbean Basin. *Colubrina cubensis* is an endangered plant in Florida. The fruit pops open to disburse the seeds. This gives the plant its common name of soldierwood.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases should cause problems with this plant.