

CINNAMOMUM CAMPHORA (L.) J. PRESL

Lauraceae/Laurel Family

Common Name: Camphor tree

Synonymy: *Cinnamomum camphora* (L.) Nees & Eberm., *Camphora camphora* (L.) H. Karst.

Origin: Eastern Asia (China, Taiwan, Korea)

Botanical Description: Evergreen tree potentially to 20 m (65 ft). Twigs green or reddish green; all vegetative parts glabrous; cut stems and bruised leaves giving off a strong aroma of camphor. Leaves simple, alternate; blades entire but may have wavy margins, mostly ovate, 4-10 cm (1.5-4 in) long and 2-5 cm (0.8-2 in) broad, glossy green above, duller green below, with impressed glands below at major veins. Flowers small, greenish-white to cream, in loose panicles on branchlets of season; 6 petaloid parts; 12 stamen parts, usually 5-9 fertile stamens plus smaller sterile staminodes. Fruits small, subglobose drupes, black, seated on persistent floral tubes.

Ecological Significance: Occurs primarily in drier disturbed areas such as roadsides and fencerows, but has invaded natural areas such as mesic hammocks, upland pine woods, and scrubland (e.g., taking over space in Polk County scrub inhabited by the federally endangered native plant, *Ziziphus celata*, or Florida jujube). Reported by natural-area managers as infesting particular parks in 14 counties (EPPC 1996). Introduced to Florida in 1875 and later established in plantations to promote camphor production, but the venture proved unprofitable (Lakela and Wunderlin 1980). Still sold as a shade tree and for windbreaks.

Distribution: Most commonly naturalized in north and central Florida, but also escapes cultivation in southern peninsula (Godfrey 1988, Long and Lakela 1971, Wunderlin 1982). Naturalized also in Georgia and west to Texas (Small 1933). Cultivated as well in other southern states: Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and the Carolinas (Meyer *et al.* 1994), and in southern California (Bailey and Bailey 1976). By 1997, documented as locally common in the flora from Texas to the Carolinas (van der Werff 1997).



Leaf, mature fruit

Life History: Main trunk often stout with several secondary trunks arising from it, all supporting a dense evergreen canopy. National co-champion trees found in Florida (in cultivation), in Hardee and Pasco counties, with heights of 22 m (72 ft) and main trunk circumferences of about 9 m (31 ft) (NRBT 1994). Fruits normally abundant on mature trees, with birds often seen to “frolic and feast” on them particularly during late winter (Kurz and Godfrey 1962). For extraction of camphor (an ethereal oil), young shoots distilled; old trees felled, chipped, and the wood steam-distilled (Willis 1973). Wood also used for cabinetwork (Bailey and Bailey 1976).

KAL



In hammock, Lake Jessup conservation area

LCA



Flowers