

EUGENIA UNIFLORA L.

Myrtaceae/Myrtle family

Common Names: Surinam cherry, cayenne cherry

Synonymy: *Eugenia michelii* Lam.

Origin: Brazil

Botanical Description: Evergreen, multibranched shrub or small tree to 10 m (30 ft) tall, usually shrub size in Florida; young stems often with red hairs and dark red new foliage. Leaves opposite, simple, short petioled, oval to lance shaped, 2.5-8 cm (1-3 in) long, shiny dark green above, paler below; margins entire. Flowers white, fragrant, about 13 mm (0.5 in) across, with many stamens; occurring solitary or in clusters of 2 or 3 at leaf axils. Fruit a fleshy, juicy, orange-red berry to 4 cm (1.5 in) wide, depressed-globose, conspicuously 8-ribbed, with 1-3 seeds.

NOTE: Differs from native *Eugenia* spp. (stoppers) by having relatively larger fruit and at least some flowers solitary at the leaf axils.

Ecological Significance: Introduced for ornament and edible fruit before 1931 (Stennis 1931, Gordon and Thomas 1997). Widely planted in central and south Florida, especially for hedges (Maxwell and Maxwell 1961, Watkins 1970). Noted as escaping cultivation and invading hammocks in south-central and south Florida (Long and Lakela 1971, Tomlinson 1980, Wunderlin 1982). Has invaded Dade and Broward County hammocks in high numbers, becoming a target of eradication by park managers (M. McMahon, Biological and Environmental Consulting, 1995 personal communication). Forms thickets in hammocks in the Bahamas (Correll and Correll 1982). Also listed as invasive in Hawaii (Wester 1992). Considered weedy in cultivated landscapes (Broschat and Meerow 1991), not recommended (Nelson 1996). Now reported from over 20 Florida natural areas, including national wildlife refuges and rare scrub habitat, in Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, Highlands, Lee, Sarasota, Hillsborough, and Pinellas counties (EPPC 1996).

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Leaves

Distribution: Widely grown in tropical regions (Bailey and Bailey 1976). Escaped from cultivation also in U.S. Virgin Islands (Little and Wadsworth 1964). Commonly naturalized in Dade County (Lakela and Craighead 1965). Herbarium specimens of Florida naturalized populations collected from as far north as St. Lucie and Brevard counties on the east coast, Polk County on the central ridge, and Pinellas County on the west coast (Wunderlin *et al.* 1995).

Life History: Hardy into central Florida and adaptable to all soil conditions not subject to flooding (Sturrock 1959). Freezes at about -1°C (30°F); grows moderately fast; can be easily pruned; has “fair” salt tolerance (Maxwell and Maxwell 1961). Flowers and fruits primarily in spring, with sometimes a second crop in the fall. Fruits eaten fresh or used in preserves (Stennis 1931). Plants visited daily by birds during the fruiting season (Stresau 1986). Fruits probably also eaten by small mammals. Propagated for cultivation by seed (Broschat and Meerow 1991). Also known as a general host for the Mediterranean fruit fly (Weems 1981).

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Fruits

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Flowers