

SCHINUS TEREBINTHIFOLIUS RADDI

Anacardiaceae/Cashew Family

Common Names: Brazilian pepper, Florida holly, Christmas berry, pepper tree

Synonymy: None

Origin: Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay

Botanical Description: Evergreen shrub or tree to 13 m (43 ft) tall, often with multi-stemmed trunks and branches arching and crossing, forming tangled masses. Leaves alternate, odd-pinnately compound with 3-11 (usually 7-9) leaflets, these elliptic-oblong, 2.5-5 cm (1-2 in) long, with upper surfaces dark green (lateral veins obvious, lighter in color), lower surfaces paler, and leaflet margins often somewhat toothed. Leaves aromatic when crushed, smelling peppery or like turpentine. Flowers unisexual (dioecious), small, in short-branched clusters at leaf axils of current-season stems; 5 petals, white to 2 mm long. Fruit a small, bright-red spherical drupe.

Ecological Significance: Imported as an ornamental in the 1840s (Barkley 1944). Has invaded a variety of areas including, but not limited to, fallow farmland, pinelands, hardwood hammocks, roadsides, and mangrove forests, in areas with a high degree of disturbance and natural areas with little disturbance (Woodall 1982, Laroche 1994a). Forms dense thickets of tangled woody stems that completely shade out and displace native vegetation. Has displaced some populations of rare listed species, such as the Beach Jacquemontia (*Jacquemontia reclinata* House, U.S. and Fla. Endangered), and Beach Star (*Remirea maritima* Aubl., Fla. Endangered) (D. F. Austin, Florida Atlantic University, personal observations). Produces certain allelopathic agents, which appear to suppress other plants' growth (Mahendra *et al.* 1995). Seeds spread by consumption and deposition of the fruit by wildlife; spread enhanced by decorative use of branches and fruit (Morton 1978). Now estimated to occupy over 283,400 ha (700,000 acres) in central and south Florida (Ferriter 1997, Wunderlin *et al.* 1995).

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Flowers

Distribution: Naturalized in most tropical and subtropical regions, including other South American countries, parts of Central America, Bermuda, the Bahama islands, the West Indies, Guam, Mediterranean Europe, North Africa, southern Asia, and South Africa. In the United States, occurs in Hawaii, California, southern Arizona, and Florida—in Florida as far north as Levy and St. Johns counties and as far west as Santa Rosa County (EPPC 1996).

Life History: Sprouts easily from the trunk and roots, even if the plant is undamaged. Seen in flower in every month of the year in Florida, with the most intense period of flowering in the fall season, September through November. Fruits profusely in southern and central Florida, with wildlife consumption of fruits contributing in large part to the spread of seeds (Ewel *et al.* 1982). Produces chemicals in leaves, flowers, and fruits that irritate human skin and respiratory passages (Ewel *et al.* 1982, Morton 1978).

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In coastal strand, Sarasota County

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Compound leaves, mature fruit