

## *Colubrina arborescens* Coffee Colubrina, Wild Coffee<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman<sup>2</sup>

### 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 (Fig. 1). 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.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Colubrina arborescens*

**Pronunciation:** kawl-yoo-BRYE-nuh  
ar-bor-RESS-enz

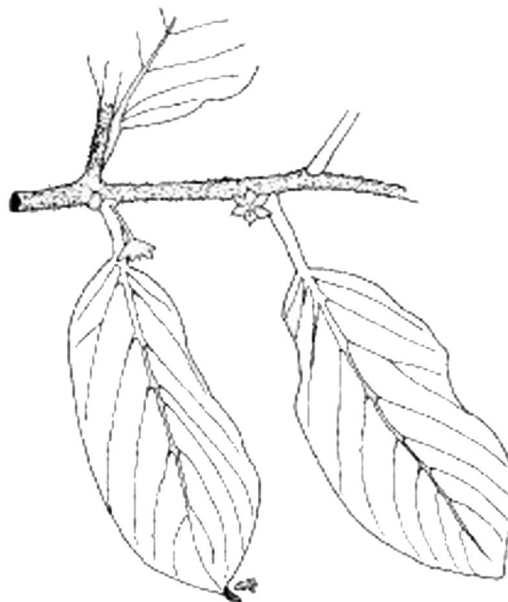
**Common name(s):** Coffee Colubrina, Wild Coffee

**Family:** *Rhamnaceae*

**Plant type:** tree

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round



**Figure 1.** Foliage of Coffee Colubrina.

**Origin:** native to Florida

**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

1. This document is FPS137, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date October, 1999. Reviewed June, 2007. Visit the EDIS Web Site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.



**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

### 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 .5 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

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**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.