



Psidium littorale Cattley Guava¹

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INTRODUCTION

This upright, multi-branched, evergreen shrub or small tree has many features which make it a popular landscape choice (Fig. 1). Unfortunately, Cattley Guava has escaped cultivation and has infested ditch banks and other wild areas in south Florida, and its use should be tempered. Capable of reaching 25 feet in height but often seen at 10 to 15 feet, the thick, smooth, dark green, four-inch-long, leathery leaves nicely complement the smooth, grey-brown to golden bark which attractively peels off in thin sheets. The single, white, one-inch-diameter flowers have many prominent stamens and look like powderpuffs in miniature. The blooms appear heaviest in April but can open sporadically throughout the year.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Psidium littorale*

Pronunciation: SID-ee-um lit-aw-RAY-lee

Common name(s): Cattley Guava, Strawberry Guava

Family: *Myrtaceae*

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

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; espalier; fruit tree; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; shade tree; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

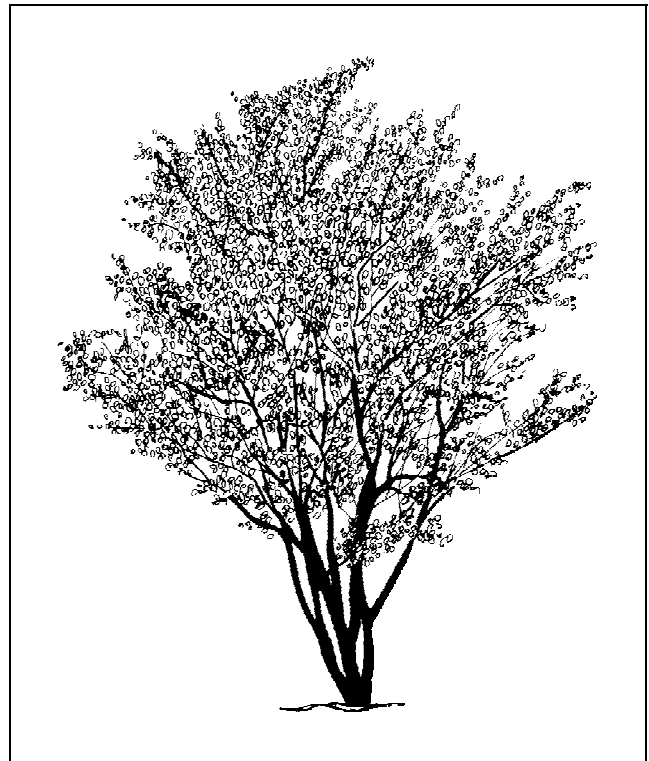


Figure 1. Middle-aged Cattley Guava.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 12 to 20 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: round; vase shape

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: medium

Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); obovate

Leaf venation: banchidodrome; pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval; round

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches; .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown; green

Current year twig thickness: medium; thin

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

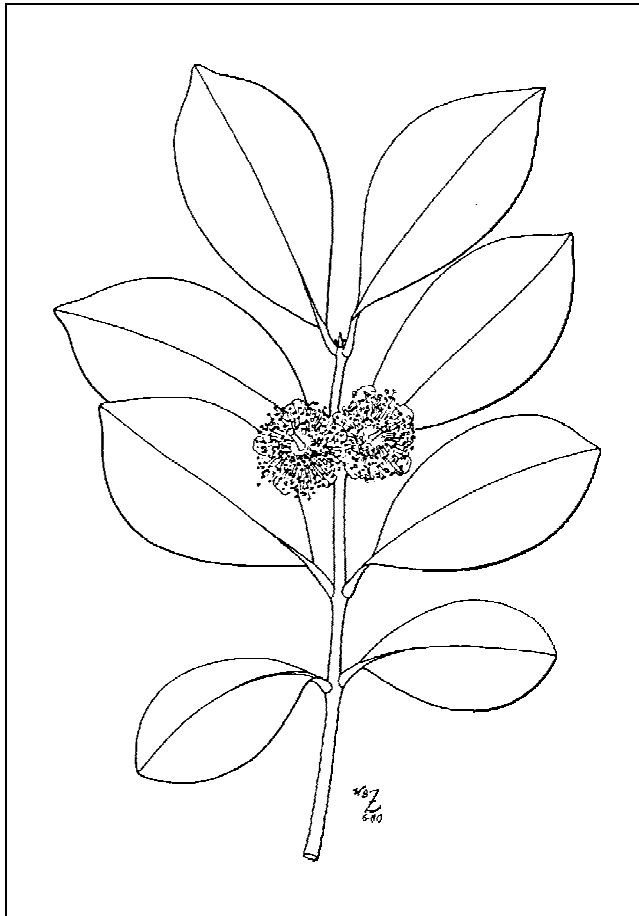


Figure 3. Foliage of Cattley Guava.

shrub border and provides both food and cover for wildlife.

Cattley Guava grows well in full sun or partial shade on a wide range of soils, including sand or clay, but fruit quality is improved on rich soils. Plants are drought-tolerant once established but benefit from a thick, organic mulch. Any necessary pruning should be done after fruiting. Pick the fruit for eating before the fruit fly larvae discover it.

Psidium littorale var. *littorale*, Lemon Guava, is slower-growing and has large yellow fruits with delightful, spicy flavor.

Propagation is by air-layerings or by seeds. Seeds germinate easily and rapidly. Seedling plants take seven or eight years to bear fruit.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Fruit fly larvae devour the fruit but do no harm to the tree.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: No entries found.

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

The 1.5-inch-diameter, bright red, pear-shaped fruits ripen to a very dark red in July and are a popular treat - for people and wildlife. Birds, raccoons, and squirrels all love the delicious, sweet-tart, white flesh and will widely spread the small, grape-like seeds. The abundant, fallen fruits may be messy on hard surfaces such as walks and cars, and trees should probably not be planted along residential streets or over sidewalks or patios. It would make a good small boulevard or median street tree and accents an area with its well-shaped canopy and interesting trunk form. It combines well with other plants in a