Cordia sebestena
Orange Geiger Tree, Broadleaf Cordia, Geiger Tree, Largeleaf Geiger Tree

*Cordia sebestena* is seen in much of south Florida’s streetscapes and native plant gardens. It is native from the Bahamas to the tip of northern South America, and has been erroneously listed as a Florida native. *C. sebestena* is an evergreen tree that flowers throughout much of the year, but is at its best in June and July. The brilliant orange-scarlet flowers are borne on terminal geranium-like clusters. Flowers are light to dark orange with short yellow-orange stamens in the throat. In Florida, the accumulation of flowers on the tree is rarely spectacular. The display is somewhat better in the Caribbean. The coarse leaves are irritating to some people. This is a highly desirable tree for seaside planting. It grows in the limestone rocks of the Florida Keys and on beaches in the Caribbean. Its soil pH preference is 5.5 to 8.5. Its strong tolerance of alkaline soils makes it an excellent choice for a wide variety of situations. *C. sebestena* is subject to extensive, but non-fatal, damage by the Geiger beetle, which seems to have an affinity to this one species. The beetles can defoliate the tree, eliminate flowering, and make the tree temporarily unattractive. Cold weather can also cause the tree to lose leaves, and will give it an unkempt look. Streetscape trees are usually not long-lived when the soil is compacted and slow-draining. Propagate *C. sebestena* by seed, cuttings and air-layering. Seedlings take three years to reach blooming size. Young trees are easily transplanted. They have an upright, slightly pyramidal form and will need about 5 years to develop a dense canopy. Older trees have a dense round crown. To encourage a young tree to have a bushier appearance, pinch back the terminal ends in January. Fertilize *C. sebestena* once or twice a year. Don’t let a fear of bugs or a fondness for soft leaves scare you away for this tree.

Orange Geiger Tree

**Syn:** Sebesten sebestena
**Origin:** Bahamas, Caribbean to Venezuela.
**Zone:** 10b-12b, 32ºF minimum
**Growth Rate:** Medium
**Flowering Months:** Occasionally all year. Best in June and July
**Flowering Days:** Not known
**Leaf Persistence:** Evergreen but for the Geiger beetle
**Messiness:** Moderate
**Salt Tolerance:** High
**Drought Tolerance:** High
**Nutritional Requirements:** Low
**Potential Pests:** Scales, mites, rust, Geiger beetles
**Typical Dimensions:** 20’x20’
**Uses** Garden, Park, Parking Lot, Patio, Seaside, Shade, Streetscape
Fort Myers, Florida

Early October

Leaves: Simple, alternate, ovate, thick and rough on the upper surface, often toothed on edges, to 9 inches long and 4 1/2 inches wide

Flowers: Funnelform, light to dark orange, up to 1 1/2 inches long, with 5 to 7 creepy lobes, borne on terminal cymes

Fruits: Drupes, egg-shaped, up to 1 1/2 inches long, changes from green to white, in persistent calyces, sticky when ripe, 1 to 4 seeds. Edible but very bland.

Fortuna, St. Thomas, Eastern Caribbean

Late August

Damage caused by the feeding of orange Geiger beetles
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