Big Native Trees for South Florida
Part 3

Stephen H. Brown
Lee County Extension
Mastic Tree
*Sideroxylon foetidissimum*

The mastic tree commonly grows to a height of 80 feet. It is an erect evergreen tree.

**Distribution:** From about Volusia County southward and into the Keys

**Cold Hardiness:** Down to 30°F

**Drought Tolerance:** High

**Salt Tolerance:** High

**Nutritional Requirements:** Low
Bark: On small trees it is smoothish, with many small fissures and horizontal cracks, gray or light brown. On large trees it is deeply furrowed, and splitting into plates.
Leaves: Simple, alternate, elliptic, yellow-green, margin entire and conspicuously wavy
The species has male and female flowers on different trees.

The fruits on the right are from a “female” tree. Female trees have edible messy fruit.
Swamp Bay
*Persea palustris*

Swamp bay prefers sandy, acid soil but is adaptable. The ambrosia beetle (*Xyleborus glabratus*) and its associated fungus (*Raffaele lauricola*) has caused substantial mortality of swamp bay. Typical height is 55 feet tall.

**Distribution:** Florida panhandle to central Florida. Woods, roadsides, edges of swamps and floodplains.

**Cold Hardiness:** Down to 0°F

**Drought Tolerance:** Medium

**Salt Tolerance:** High

**Nutritional Requirements:** Low
As the tree ages the bark becomes more furrowed and blocky.

**Bark:** Gray-brown, scaly, ridged
Leaves: Simple, entire, alternate, lance-shaped to oblong, fragrant. The tree is evergreen.

Swamp Bay (*P. palustris*)
- Green above & light green below

Red Bay (*P. borbonia*)
- Green above & grayish below
Red Bay Psyllid Galls

This avocado relative is best used in a background planting because of disfiguring galls caused by insects.
Red Maple
*Acer rubrum*

**Distribution:** Florida panhandle to the Tamiami Trail. Woods, roadsides, edges of swamps and floodplains. Its typical height is about 45 feet but it can grow to 90 feet tall.

**Cold Hardiness:** Down to -40°F

**Drought Tolerance:** Medium

**Salt Tolerance:** Low

**Nutritional Requirements:** Low

The red maple is a small to large-sized deciduous tree. It is particularly useful along retention ponds, drainage swales, and canal banks. It grows just as well in roadway medians, on road shoulders and in parking lots.
Tree without irrigation

Tree with irrigation
Bark: Silvery gray; smooth when young, roughened with age
Leaves: Simple, opposite, 3- to 5-lobed, coated below with a dense covering of whitish hairs
Sweetgum
Liquidambar styraciflua

Sweetgum is a single-trunked, large deciduous tree with spreading branches and a conical shade. It can grow 60 to 100 feet tall. The tree is drought tolerant but grows best in moist soil.

**Distribution:** Florida panhandle to central Florida. Woods, roadsides, edges of swamps and floodplains.

**Cold Hardiness:** Down to -20°F

**Drought Tolerance:** High

**Salt Tolerance:** Low

**Nutritional Requirements:** Medium
Bark: Grayish, furrowed, distinctive ridges and groves
Sweetgum
Liquidambar styraciflua

**Leaves:** Simple, alternate, 3 to 7 lobes, toothed along the margins. The leaves usually display bright color before falling in winter.
**Fruits:** Woody multiple capsules commonly called “gumballs.” They have many prickly points. They produce many, small, winged-seeds. They can become a nuisance as they fall from the tree.
Red Maple or Sweetgum?
Red Maple or Sweetgum?

Sweetgum

Red Maple

Sweetgum

Sweetgum

Red Maple

Red Maple
The sea grape is a common sight in south Florida. It is used as a hedge and small to medium-sized tree. However, it can attain height of more than 40 feet.

**Distribution:** Edges of beaches and coastal hammocks. South-central and southern Florida.

**Cold Hardiness:** Down to 34°F

**Drought Tolerance:** High

**Salt Tolerance:** High

**Nutritional Requirements:** Low
Sea Grape
Coccoloba uvifera

Form: Varying greatly in size from a low prostrate shrub on wind-swept beaches to a straggly or wide spreading tree. Often branching near the base

Soil: Poor, sandy extremely salt tolerant

Very probable the first land plant of America seen by Christopher Columbus.
**Bark:** Peels off in small flakes and becomes mottled whitish, light gray, and brown

The wood is hard, moderately heavy, and very susceptible to attack by dry-wood termite.
Sea Grape
*Coccoloba uvifera*

**Leaves:** Simple, alternate, evergreen, almost circular, coarse
Sea Grape
*Coccoloba uvifera*

**Fruits:** Green when young, purple when mature. About 1 inches diameter. Borne in conspicuous, 8 to 12-inch-long spikes. Edible fresh, used for jelly and wine-like beverage.
Slash Pine  
*Pinus elliottii*

A tall, single-trunked tree, ovoid crown, and grows to 100 feet tall. The slash pine is as much a part of the Florida landscape as the cabbage palm.

**Distribution:** Inland and coastal flatwoods, throughout Florida

**Cold Hardiness:** Down to 10°F

**Drought Tolerance:** High

**Salt Tolerance:** High

**Nutritional Requirements:** Low
Bark: Reddish brown, with irregular, flaking
Slash Pine
*Pinus elliottii*

**Fruits:** Cones 3 to 6 inches long with prickly scales containing winged seeds
Southern Red Cedar
*Juniperus virginiana*

An erect, conical, densely foliated very low branching, evergreen tree. Especially useful along streets, in cemeteries, and as a tall, thick hedge along property borders. It grows to 40 feet tall in south Florida.

**Distribution:** Panhandle to central Florida

**Cold Hardiness:** Down to -40°F

**Drought Tolerance:** High

**Salt Tolerance:** Medium

**Nutritional Requirements:** Low
Trees in natural area
Senior Adult

Used as hedge along property border
Bark: More often gray sometimes reddish brown; exfoliating in thin, shaggy strips
Southern Red Cedar  
*Juniperus virginiana*

**Leaves:** Small, green, scale-like, crowded around the twigs and branches
Southern Red Cedar
Juniperus virginiana

**Fruits:** Borne in bluish, rounded, berry-like female cones that are produced in late summer and fall. Male cones are yellowish.
That’s it for now folks.
• Lawn and Garden Homepage
   http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenHome.shtml

• Native Plants Fact Sheets
   http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsA_Z.shtml#N

• Flowering Trees Fact Sheets
   http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsA_Z.shtml#T

• Brownsh@leegov.com