

Myrsine guianensis Rapanca, Myrsine¹

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Introduction

This evergreen shrub is grown primarily for its smooth green foliage. Myrsine is a dense, vertically growing shrub that can reach a height of 15 to 20 feet. Older plants become spreading and woody with numerous trunks. The attractive leaves of this plant are oval and a medium to dark green color. Young, vigorous plants in the nursery have well-spaced leaves along the green twigs, but those on older shrubs tend to cluster toward the ends of the stem. Small, inconspicuous greenish-yellow flowers occur in clusters that are found along the branches. Flowers are succeeded by decorative, shiny, black berries; plants of both sexes must be grown close by to obtain fruiting.

General Information

Scientific name: *Myrsine guianensis*

Pronunciation: mer-SIGH-nee gee-uh-NEN-sis

Common name(s): rapanea, myrsine

Family: *Myrcinaceae*

Plant type: tree

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 1)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: reclamation plant; trained as a standard; hedge; near a deck or patio; specimen; screen; border; attracts butterflies; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet)

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 15 to 20 feet

Spread: 8 to 12 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: symmetrical habit with a regular (or smooth) outline and individuals having more or less identical forms

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: revolute

Leaf shape: obovate

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

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Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: greenish-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: can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; no thorns; not particularly showy

Current year stem/twig color: brown

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade

Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; 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: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Myrsine can be used in the landscape as an accent plant in a shaded or partially sunny landscape. It is excellent when used in shrub groupings. It is a good background plant in a shrub border, forming a fairly dense screen. Plant about 6 to 8 feet apart for a quick-forming screen. It is also useful as an understory plant and lends itself well to dune conditions.

Myrsine guianensis will adapt to variable soil conditions including poor drainage. This makes it especially useful near foundations or water retention basins, since water

often sits here after a rainfall. Regular clipping will be required if it is used as a foundation planting because of the plant's tendency to grow 20 feet tall. This shrub grows best in a partial to full shade location in the landscape, and it has a good salt spray tolerance. Native habitat includes the lee side of coastal upland plant communities where soil is sandy with shell fragments. Soil pH is neutral to slightly alkaline and may be poorly drained. It can also be found in baldcypress swamps among other wet-site-tolerant plants.

This plant is commonly propagated by seed. Young plants may also be transplanted from a field nursery with relative ease.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.