

CUPANIOPSIS ANACARDIOIDES (A. RICH.) REDKF.

Sapindaceae/Soapberry Family

- Common Names:** Carrotwood, tuckeroo tree
Synonymy: *Cupania anacardioides* A. Rich.
Origin: Australia

Botanical Description: Slender evergreen tree, usually single trunked, to 10 m (33 ft) tall, with dark gray outer bark and often orange inner bark (hence the common name). Leaves alternate, once compound (usually even-pinnate), with petioles swollen at the base; 4-12 leaflets, stalked, oblong, leathery, shiny yellowish green, to 20 cm (8 in) long and 7.5 cm (3 in) wide, with margins entire and tips rounded or slightly indented. Flowers numerous, white to greenish yellow, up to 0.8 cm (0.4 in) wide, in branched clusters to 35 cm (14 in) long, at leaf axils; 5 petals; 6-8 stamens. Fruit a short-stalked, woody capsule, to 2.2 cm (0.9 in) across, with 3 distinctly ridged segments, yellow-orange when ripe, drying to brown and splitting open to expose 3 shiny oval black seeds covered by a yellow-red crust (aril).

Ecological Significance: Introduced for landscaping in the 1960s, quickly becoming popular in southern Florida for its fast growth, ease of propagation, and adaptability to coastal conditions (Lockhart *et al.* 1997). Even earliest plantings noted as freely seeding (Menninger 1964). By 1990, seedlings found established in various habitats, disturbed and undisturbed, on both coasts (Oliver 1992). Invades spoil islands, beach dunes, marshes, tropical hammocks, pinelands, mangrove and cypress swamps, scrub habitats, and coastal strands (Lockhart *et al.* 1997). Now found in natural areas of 14 coastal counties in central and south Florida, with reproducing wild populations established already in Brevard, Martin, and Sarasota counties (EPPC 1996, Lockhart *et al.* 1997). Appears able to compete well with even other aggressive non-native plants such as Brazilian pepper (Lockhart *et al.* 1997). Greatest densities of seedlings and saplings, to 24 stems per m², found so far in mangrove forests, where they greatly alter the understory habitat (Lockhart *et al.* 1997). In recent years, ornamental use of carrotwood discouraged or restricted by local ordinance in several counties and 1 municipality (G. Jubinsky, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 1997 personal communication).



Fruits, seeds

Distribution: Occurs naturally along north and east coasts of Australia on rocky beaches, sand dunes, and in hilly scrub and riverine and monsoon forests (Reynolds 1985). Cultivated in various subtropical areas, including California (Oliver 1992). In Florida, naturalized in coastal counties from Brevard and Hillsborough south to Dade and Collier (EPPC 1996).

Life History: Tolerant of salt, full sun, full shade, poor soils, poor drainage, and dry areas (Oliver 1992). Older trees able to withstand cold to about -6°C (22°F) (Stresau 1986). Flowers in Florida in late winter/early spring, January and February, with fruits maturing in April and May (Lockhart *et al.* 1997). Seeds dispersed by birds, including mocking-birds and fish-eating crows (Austin 1996).



Bird dispersal of seeds



**Sapling in mangrove community,
Palm Beach County**



Flowers