

PSIDIUM GUAJAVA L.

Myrtaceae/Myrtle Family

Common Names: Common guava, apple guava

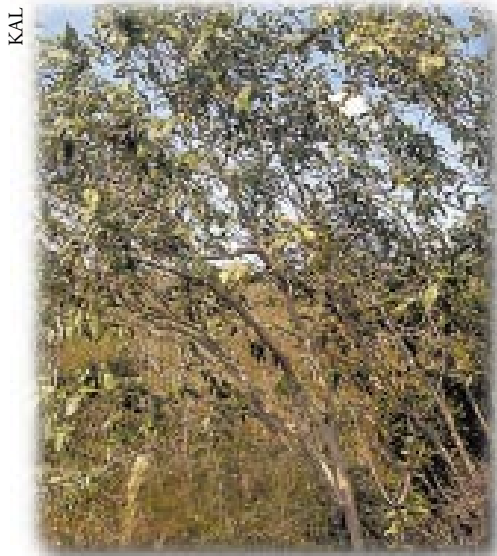
Synonymy: None

Origin: Tropical America

Botanical Description: Evergreen shrub or small tree to 9 m (30 ft) tall, with scaly greenish-brown bark and young branches 4-angled, pubescent. Leaves opposite, simple, short stalked, entire, oval to oblong-elliptic, to 15 cm (6 in) long, pubescent below, with veins impressed above and conspicuously raised below. Flowers white, fragrant, to 4 cm (1.6 in) wide, borne singly or a few together at leaf axils; many stamens. Fruit an oval or pear-shaped berry, 3-10 cm (1-4 in) long, yellow at maturity, with yellow or dark pink flesh somewhat dull in taste; seeds numerous.

NOTE: May be confused with the strawberry guava (see preceding pages).

Ecological Significance: Introduced early to Florida, naturalized by 1765 (DeBrahm 1773). Planted extensively for edible fruit and ornament; weedy in landscaping (Broschat and Meerow 1991); spreading into hammocks and pinelands (Long and Lakela 1971, Morton 1976). Has become dominant in the understory of some cypress strands (D. F. Austin, Florida Atlantic University, 1997 personal communication). Forms thickets and has a serious impact in native forests and open woodlands (Cronk and Fuller 1995). Present as a weed in 27 countries; a common to serious pest in 9 of these (Holm *et al.* 1979). Now a common element of coastal moist forests in Puerto Rico (Little and Wadsworth 1964). Reported from Florida parks and preserves in Broward, Collier, Dade, Highlands, Lee, Martin, Osceola, Palm Beach, and Sarasota counties (EPPC 1996). Along with the strawberry guava and the Surinam cherry, also serves as a major host for the naturalized Caribbean fruit fly, *Anastrepha suspensa* (Loew), which occasionally spreads to commercial citrus crops (Nguyen *et al.* 1993).



Along roadside,
Indian River County



Leaves

Distribution: Native to tropical America, probably from southern Mexico south to South America, but its distribution greatly extended through cultivation (Little and Wadsworth 1964). Frequently naturalized (Bailey and Bailey 1976). Naturalized in Old World tropics, in Florida and the West Indies (Cronk and Fuller 1995). Found in Florida from Pinellas and Brevard counties south to the Keys (Nelson 1994).

Life History: Forms dense thickets (Scurlock 1987). Grows rapidly and tolerates shade (Cronk and Fuller 1995). Young plants more tolerant of cold, to -7°C (20°F), if water stressed (Utsunomiya 1988). Flowers and fruits all year (Wunderlin 1982). Has high seed production, early seed maturity, and seed dispersal by both birds and mammals (Cronk and Fuller 1995).

KAL



Bark

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Young stem