

Ligustrum lucidum Aiton f.



Common Name: Glossy privet; tree privet; wax-leaf ligustrum; Chinese privet

Synonymy: None

Origin: China

Botanical Description: Evergreen shrub or tree to 10 m (33 ft) tall, but typically smaller, with a dense, rounded crown and glabrous twigs with corky lenticels. Leaves opposite, simple, leathery, ovate to elliptic, to 15 cm (6 in) long by 6 cm (2.3 in) wide, glossy dark green above; margins entire, with a thin translucent edge often visible when held up to light, bases rounded to broadly wedge shaped, tips narrowing to a sharp point; leaves often V-shaped (as if folded lengthwise down the middle). Flowers small, white, fragrant, bisexual, numerous, in pyramidal clusters at branch tips; corolla tube to 3 mm (0.1 in), equaling or shorter than the corolla lobes, stamens exerted beyond corolla. Fruit a persistent, globose to oblong, blackish-purple drupe, to 8 mm (0.3 in) long.

NOTE: Two other nonnative *Ligustrum* species occur in Florida: distinguish *L. sinense* by its much smaller, rounded, deciduous to semi-deciduous leaves and pubescent twigs, and *L. japonicum* by its corolla tube being longer than the corolla lobes and by its shiny, smaller, flat leaves that lack translucent margins and have blunt apices. *L. japonicum*, Japanese privet or wax-leaf privet, is commonly mistaken for *L. lucidum* in the nursery trade, and is also documented from natural areas in north Florida.

Ecological Significance: Introduced as an ornamental and found “spontaneous around towns where it is grown on the coasts of North Carolina and Louisiana” by 1933 (Small 1933). Now widespread in mesic hardwood hammocks of north Florida (D. Ward, 1994 pers. comm.), including San Felasco Hammock, Crystal River, Ichetucknee Springs, Florida Caverns, and DeLeon Springs state parks (FLEPPC 2002). Invades and dominates primary broadleaved forests in New Zealand, where it is a banned plant (Smale and Gardener 1999). Naturalized in xeric, old-growth (Ribichich and Protomastro 1998), and subtropical riparian forests in Argentina (Montaldo 1993). Invades secondary forests in Japan (Ishida et al. 1998) and closed-canopy forests in Spain (Guix et al. 2001). Prohibited in South Africa where it invades forest, woodlands and riverbanks (Henderson 2001). In Australia, it invades sclerophyllous woodlands (Madden and Swarbrick 1990), lowland grassland and pasture, riparian areas, and coastal rainforests, where it forms dense thickets and supports artificially high bird populations (Blood 2001). Competes aggressively for light, water, and nutrients

(Blood 2001). Seedling may germinate in high densities under the *Ligustrum* canopy and up to 600 seedlings per m² have been documented (Burrows and Kohen 1983). Causes allergic and asthmatic reactions due to highly allergenic pollen (Jiang et al. 1993) and perfumes released during flowering (Swarbrick et al. 1999). Leaves and fruits can be toxic to small children (Blood 2001).

Distribution: Herbarium specimens documented from Alachua, Duval, Escambia, Gadsden, Highlands, Jackson, Marion, Santa Rosa, Suwannee, and Volusia counties (Wunderlin and Hansen 2002). Also recorded from Citrus, Columbia, and Leon counties (FLEPPC 2002). Escaped in Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina (Wilson and Wood 1959), Texas (McWilliams and Rector 1998), Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Maryland (USDA NRCS 2002), California, and Hawaii (DOFAW 2001). Naturalized extensively in New Zealand (Webb et al. 1988) and Australia (Blood 2001), and occurs in England, Spain, Japan, and South and Central America (MOBOT).

Life History: Fast growing when young, but growth slows when older, produces a dense canopy and multiple trunks, tolerates full sun to partial shade, and is moderately drought-tolerant (Gilman and Watson 1993d). Highly salt- and wind-tolerant (Rose and Smith 1976) and can withstand fire (Blood 2001). Leaves frost sensitive, but stems survive to -15°C (5°F) (Dirr et al. 1993). Tolerates xeric conditions, high soil phosphorous and nutrient concentrations (Ribichich and Protomastro 1998), clay, loam, sand, and acidic to alkaline soils (Gilman and Watson 1993d). Prefers well-drained soils and will not tolerate waterlogging, but grows well on riverbanks and levees (Howell and Benson 2000). Shallow, fibrous roots create root competition and inhibit the growth of other species (Fantz 1982). Seedlings tolerate pH as low as 3.5 (Fan and Wang 2000). One-hundred percent germination in light and 97% in shade at 20-30°C (68-86°F). Seeds germinated equally well whether or not they passed through bird digestive tracts (Montaldo 1993). Over 30% of fruits contain two seeds, and one shoot may have over 10,000 fruits (Westoby et al. 1983). One plant may produce over 200,000 fruits (Montaldo 1993). Fruit consumed by birds and rabbits (Burrows and Kohan 1986). Seeds are bird dispersed and survive for up to 2 years in the soil seed bank (van Aalst 1992), but older seeds may have low viability (Bardsley 1979). Mature plants regenerate rapidly from cut stumps (Mowatt 1981) and will resprout in shade (van Aalst 1992); however, fruit production declines in deep shade (Blood 2001).