Psidium cattleianum Sabine



Common Name: Strawberry guava, Cattley guava

Synonymy: *P. littorale* Raddi var. *longipes* (O. Berg) Fosb.

Origin: Brazil

Botanical Description: Evergreen shrub or small tree to 8 m (25 ft) tall, with gray to reddish brown peeling bark and young branches round, pubescent. Leaves opposite, simple, entire, glabrous, elliptic to oblong, to 8 cm (3 in) long. Flowers to 2.5 cm (1.2 in) wide, borne singly at leaf axils, with white petals and a mass of white and yellow stamens. Fruit a globose berry, 3-6 cm (1.2-2.4 in) long, purple red, with whitish flesh usually sweet tasting when ripe; seeds numerous.

NOTE: May be confused with the common guava (*P. guajava*, on the following page), which has 4-angled branches and larger leaves with the veins prominently raised below.

Ecological Significance: Introduced to Florida in the 1880s for ornament and as a fruit crop (Gordon and Thomas 1997), and since planted extensively (Watkins 1970, Broschat and Meerow 1991). Noted as "often growing wild" by the 1950s (Barrett 1956). Forms thickets and shades out native vegetation in forests and open woodlands (Cronk and Fuller 1995). Has had catastrophic effect on native habitats of Mauritius, and considered the worst pest plant in Hawaii, where it has invaded a variety of natural areas (Cronk and Fuller 1995). Has become dominant in some native forests of Hawaii, including in 2 national parks, where its clonal spread is enhanced by activities of feral pigs (Huenneke and Vitousek 1990). Reported from Florida parks and preserves (FLEPPC 2002). Along with the common 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).

Distribution: Native to Brazil, naturalized in Florida, Hawaii, tropical Polynesia, Norfolk Island, and Mauritius (Cronk and Fuller 1995). In Florida, documented as invading prairie hammocks, mesic flatwoods, marl prairies, hydric hammocks, bottomland forests, strand swamps, baygalls, seepage slopes, and ruderal communities. Naturalized across peninsular Florida, with herbarium specimens documented from from 18 counties as far north as Seminole and Orange counties south to Miami-Dade County (Wunderlin and Hansen 2004). Reported in natural areas from Brevard County (FLEPPC 2005).

Life History: Grows rapidly, tolerates shade, and produces root suckers (Cronk and Fuller 1995). Root-suckering ability important to its dominance in natural habitats (Huenneke and Vitousek 1990). Has good salt tolerance (Maxwell and Maxwell 1961). 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).