

# PLANT IDENTIFICATION TIPS:

## UPLAND and WETLAND INVASIVE EXOTICS



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[www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/invaspec/index.htm](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/invaspec/index.htm)

Illustrations courtesy of the Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants, IFAS, University of Florida  
(<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/>)

Except:

*Abrus precatorius*, courtesy of Jackie Smith, FDEP.

*Albizia julibrissin*, from Kurz, H., and R.K. Godfrey. 1962. Trees of Northern Florida. Univ. Press of Florida, Gainesville.

*Albizia lebbek*, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, *Ficus microcarpa*, *Jasminum dichotomum*, *Leucaena leucocephala*, courtesy of Miami-Dade County Dept of Environmental Resources Management, illustrations by Elizabeth Smith.

*Imperata cylindrica*, courtesy of LeRoy G. Holm (used in World's Worst Weeds, 1979).

*Lonicera japonica*, from Godfrey, R.K., and J. Wooten. 1981. Aquatic and Wetland Plants of Southeastern United States: Dicotyledons. Univ. of Georgia Press, Athens.

*Neyraudia reynaudiana*, from Hitchcock, A.S., and A. Chase. 1950. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Manual of the Grasses of the United States. USDA Ag. Research, Washington, DC.

*Pueraria montana*, courtesy of Suzanne Kennedy, Brevard County Natural Resources Dept.

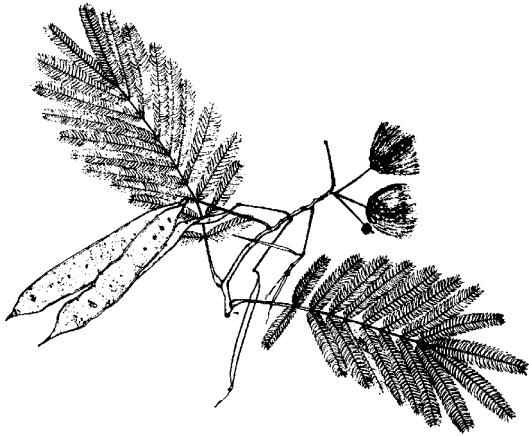
*Scaevola sericea*, courtesy of K.C. Burks, FDEP.

*Solanum viarum*, courtesy of Jeff Mullahey, Agronomy Dept., Univ. of Fla. IFAS (used in # SS-AGR-58. 1996).

## Trees

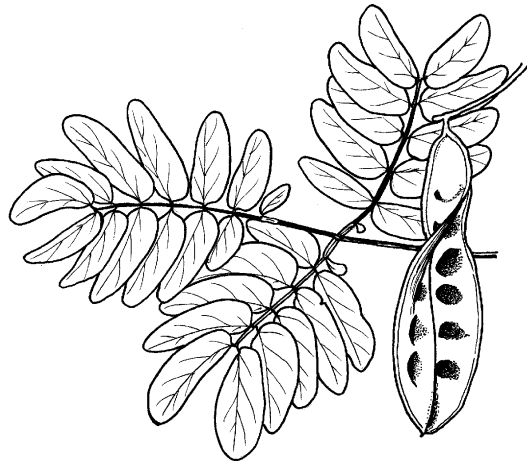
### *Albizia julibrissin* – mimosa tree

- Trees to \_\_\_ ft, with spreading crown
- Unarmed, i.e., no thorns or prickles
- Leaves twice compound, leaflets tiny, many
- Flowers in pink “powder-puff” clusters
- Fruit a long, flat pod



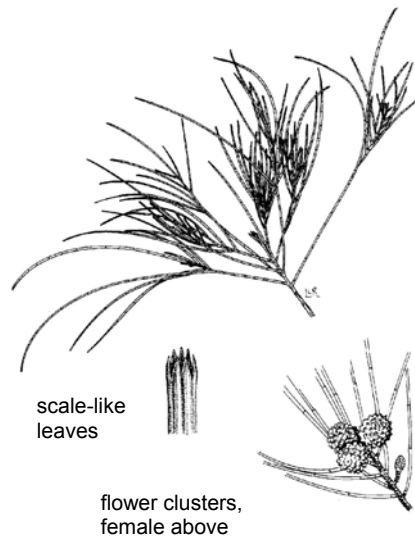
### *Albizia lebeck* – woman's tongue

- Trees to 65 ft, with spreading crown
- Unarmed, i.e., no thorns or prickles
- Leaves twice compound, leaflets 1-2 in. long
- Flowers in yellowish “powder-puff” clusters
- Fruit a flat long pod, persisting & “rattling” in wind



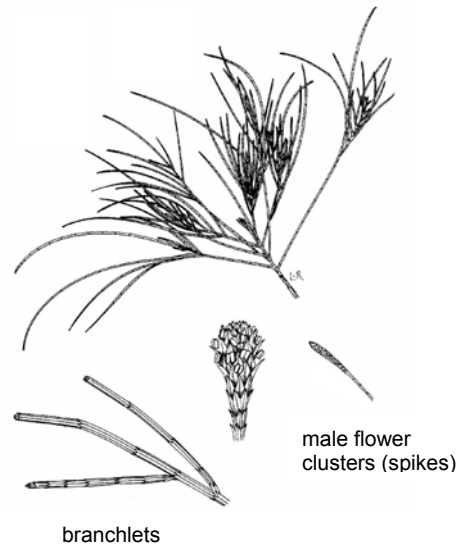
### *Casuarina equisetifolia* – Australian-pine

- Trees to 150 ft, with open crown
- Branchlets thin, grayish green
- Leaves tiny, scalelike, in whorls of 6-8
- Flowers tiny, unisexual, on same tree
- Fruits in woody, conelike clusters



### *Casuarina glauca* – thicket Australian-pine

- Trees to 65 ft, with dense crown
- Spreads by root suckers
- Branchlets thin, green, often waxy
- Leaves tiny, scalelike, in whorls of 12-17
- Flowers tiny, mostly male trees in Florida



## Trees

### ***Cinnamomum camphora* – camphor tree**

- Evergreen tree to 60 ft tall, glabrous
- Cut stems/leaves highly aromatic
- Leaves simple, alternate, with short petioles
- Leaf blades lustrous, entire
- Glands on lower leaf surfaces



### ***Cupaniopsis anacardioides* – carrotwood**

- Slender evergreen tree to 10 m
- Inner bark often orange (carrot color)
- Leaves large, compound, with 4-12 leaflets
- Leaflets leathery, dark green, oblong
- Flowers tiny, green-yellow, in long racemes



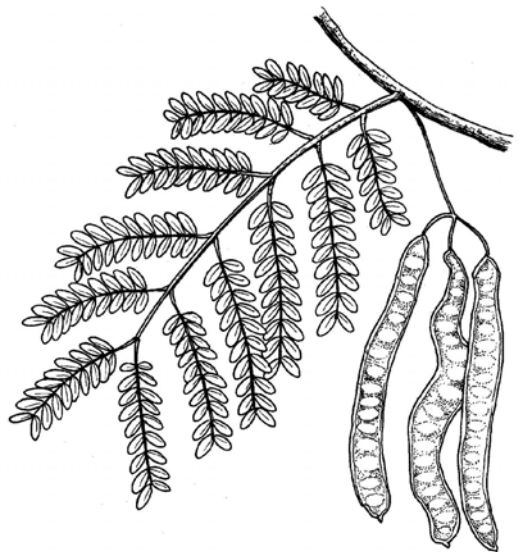
### ***Ficus microcarpa* – laurel fig**

- Tree with short trunk, rounded crown
- Often growing on other trees when young
- Milky sap from stems or leaves
- Leaves alternate, small, dark shiny green
- Figs yellow or dark red when ripe



### ***Leucaena leucocephala* – lead tree**

- Small tree, to 30 ft tall, often in thickets
- Stems unarmed, i.e., no thorns or prickles
- Leaves twice compound, leaflets oblong
- Flowers white to yellowish in round clusters
- Pods long flat, red-brown, hanging clusters



## Trees

### ***Melaleuca quinquenervia* – melaleuca**

- Evergreen tree to 100 ft, with slender crown
- Whitish, thick, spongy bark sheds easily
- Leaves alternate, evergreen, gray-green
- Flowers white, in "bottle-brush" spikes
- Fruits small, brown woody capsules



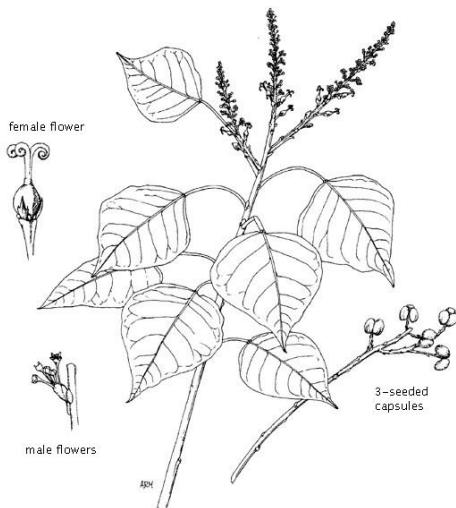
### ***Melia azederach* – Chinaberry**

- Deciduous tree to 50 ft tall, often in thickets
- Twigs stout, with purplish bark
- Leaves large, twice or thrice compound
- Flowers lilac in large panicles
- Fruit a thinly fleshy drupe, yellow



### ***Sapium sebiferum* – Chinese tallow tree**

- Deciduous tree to 50 ft tall
- Sap milky, poisonous
- Leaves ovate with narrowed tips, aspen-like
- Pair of glands at petiole tops
- Fruit a hard capsule with 3 white, waxy seeds



### ***Schinus terebinthifolius* – Brazilian pepper**

- Shrubby evergreen tree to 13 m tall
- Leaves alternate, once compound
- Leaflets usually 7-9, often toothed
- Flowers unisexual, small, white
- Fruits bright red small drupes in clusters



## Vines

### *Abrus precatorius* – rosary pea

- Stems branching, twining, woody below
- Leaves alternate, even-pinnate compound
- Leaflets oval-oblong, in 5-15 pairs
- Flowers pea-like, white-pink to reddish
- Seeds scarlet and black, **very poisonous**



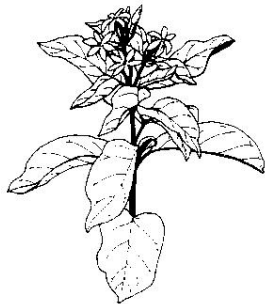
### *Dioscorea bulbifera* – air potato

- Stems herbaceous, twining to 60+ ft
- Leaves alternate, heart shaped
- Forms many aerial tubers
- Rarely flowering in Florida
- Leaf-blade veins in parallel curves



### *Jasminum dichotomum* – Gold Coast jasmine

- Evergreen woody climber, often shrubby
- Leaves opposite, glossy green, roundish oval
- Flowers fragrant, white (pink in bud)
- Flowers opening at night
- Fruit a two-lobed fleshy black berry



### *Lonicera japonica* – Japanese honeysuckle

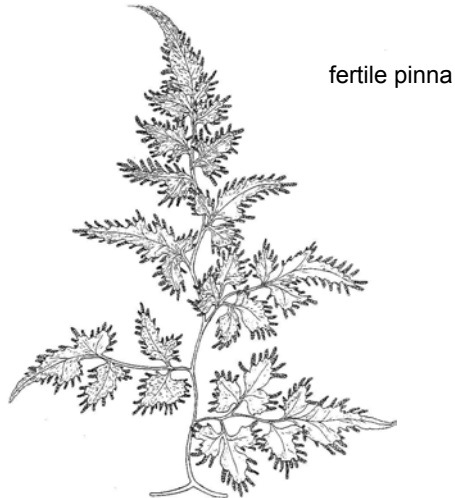
- Stems woody, trailing or climbing
- Leaves opposite, evergreen, oval
- Young stems and leaves hairy
- Flowers white, yellowing with age
- Leaves on new shoots often toothed



## Vines

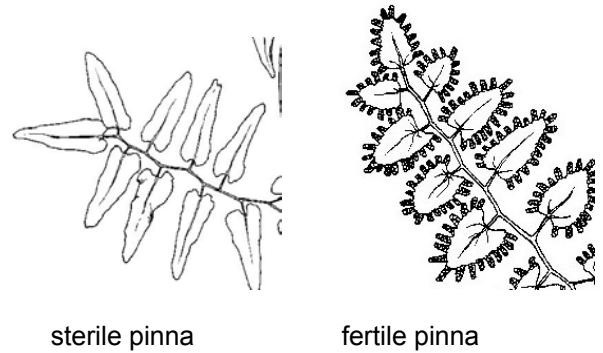
### ***Lygodium japonicum* – Japanese climbing fern**

- Fronds delicate, twining, to 90 ft long
- Pinnae spread out along stemlike rachis
- Pinnae triangular shaped, pinnately divided
- Sterile leaflets incised on margin
- Fertile leaflets with lobe edges narrowed



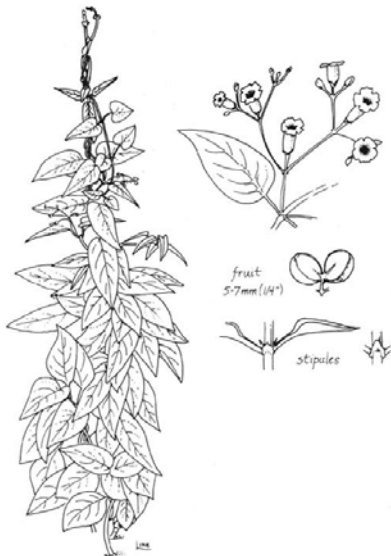
### ***Lygodium microphyllum* – Old World climbing fern**

- Fronds delicate, twining, to 90 ft long
- Pinnae spread out along stemlike rachis
- Pinnae more oblong shaped, not as divided
- Sterile leaflets lance shaped, not incised
- Fertile leaflets fringed with pinched lobes



### ***Paederia foetida* – skunk vine**

- Stems woody below, twining, climbing
- All parts with disagreeable odor
- Leaves opposite, lance shaped
- Flowers bell shaped, pale lilac
- Fruit a shiny orange-brown round capsule



### ***Pueraria montana* var. *lobata* – kudzu**

- Deciduous, twining vine, engulfing area
- Leaves compound with 3 large leaflets
- Young stems hairy
- Flowers pea-type, reddish lavender
- Fruit a bean pod with golden-brown hairs



## Shrubs

### ***Ardisia crenata* – coral ardisia**

- Small shrub tolerating deep shade
- Leaves alternate, shiny, leathery
- Leaf edges crisped, or scalloped
- Flowers white in axillary clusters
- Fruits bright red, in drooping clusters



### ***Ardisia elliptica* – shoebutton ardisia**

- Glabrous evergreen shrub to 15 ft tall
- Leaves alternate, entire, gland-dotted below
- New foliage often reddish
- Flowers mauve, in clusters at leaf axils
- Fruits black when ripe



### ***Colubrina asiatica* – lather leaf**

- Sprawling evergreen shrub to 20+ ft tall
- Stems glabrous, many branched
- Leaves alternate, shiny, ovate, serrate
- Flowers tiny, greenish white, in leaf axils
- Fruit a brown capsule with 3 grayish seeds



### ***Ligustrum sinense* – Chinese privet**

- Semi-evergreen shrub to 15 ft tall
- Twigs densely pubescent
- Leaves opposite, small, dark green in wild
- Leaves variegated in cultivation
- Flowers white, small, many, odorous



## Shrubs

### ***Mimosa pigra* – catclaw mimosa**

- Thicket-forming, prickly shrub to 20 ft tall
- Large recurved prickles on stems
- Mimosa-like compound leaves, sensitive
- Flowers pink in small rounded clusters
- Fruits flat brown hairy segmented pods



### ***Rhodomyrtus tomentosa* – downy rose myrtle**

- Evergreen shrub to 6 ft tall
- Young stems soft hairy
- Leaves opposite, entire, soft hairy below
- Flowers rose-pink, with 5 petals each
- Fruit a round, sweet-fleshed, purple berry



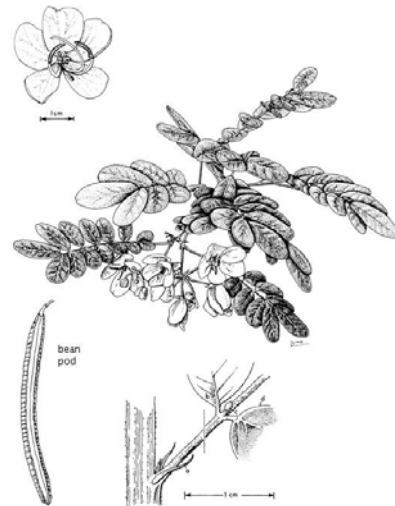
### ***Scaevola sericea* – beach naupaka**

- Large shrub, forming dense mounds
- Leaves alternate, crowded near stem tips
- Leaf blades coarse, shiny, with curved edges
- Flowers white to pale lilac, “half-flowers”
- Fruits round, shiny white



### ***Senna pendula* – climbing cassia**

- Sprawling evergreen shrub to 14 ft tall
- Stems somewhat zigzag, sparsely hairy
- Leaves compound with 3-6 leaflet pairs
- Flowers yellow, 5 petaled, near stem tips
- Pods brown, slender, cylindric, glabrous



## Grasses

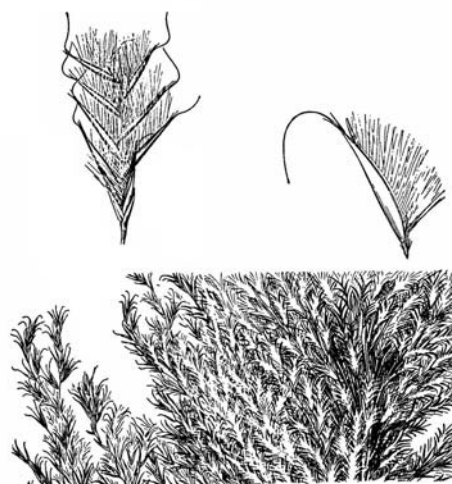
### ***Imperata cylindrica* – cogon grass**

- Rhizomes scaly, pointy like *Panicum repens*
- Leaves yellow-green, long pointed, erect
- Leaf-blade midvein off-center
- Leaf blades hairy at base
- Flowers in narrow, fluffy, white spikes



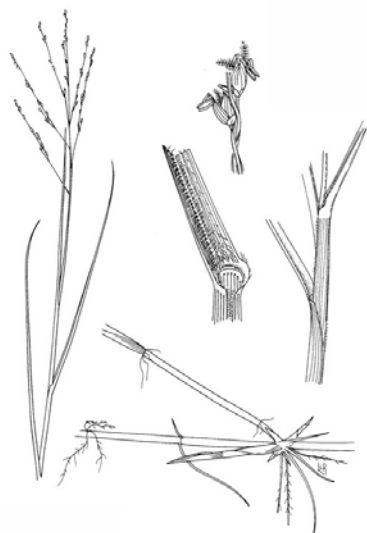
### ***Neyraudia reynaudiana* – silk, or Burma, reed**

- Stems reedlike, to 9 ft tall
- Stems often branched
- Leaf sheaths woolly at top
- Large, densely feathery, nodding panicles
- Spikelets long-hairy, short awned



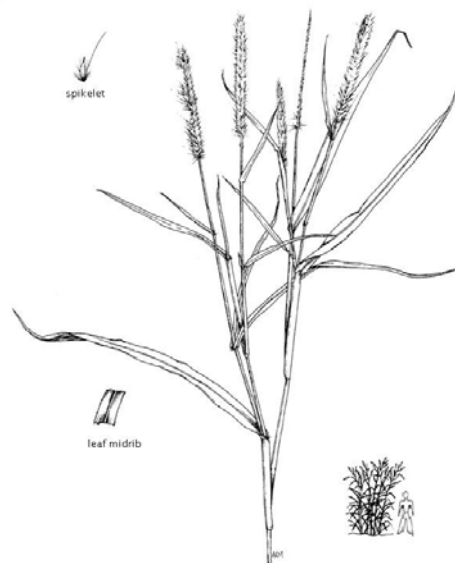
### ***Panicum repens* – torpedo grass**

- Rhizomes with hard torpedo-like tips
- Leaf blades with sparse hairs on upper side
- Ligule a tiny collar with short hairs at top
- Sheaths glabrous or hairy near top
- Inflorescence branched & open



### ***Pennisetum purpureum* – elephant grass**

- Perennial grass to 9+ ft tall
- Stem nodes bluish, leaves often bluish green
- Leaf blades with stout, keeled midrib
- Inflorescence a dense, bristly, tawny spike
- Spikelets with bristles falling at maturity



## Other Herbaceous Plants

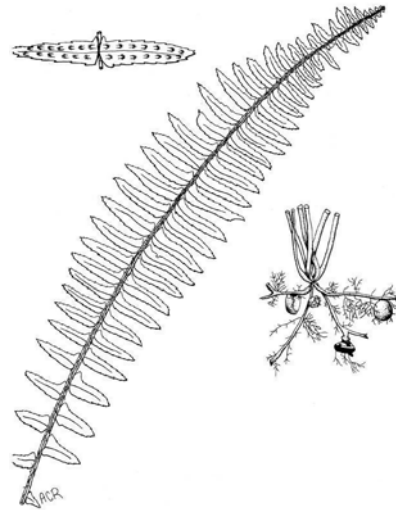
### ***Colocasia esculenta* – wild taro**

- Perennial in stands to 5 ft tall
- Leaves from corms, stolons, rhizomes
- Leaves large, arrowhead shape
- Petioles attached to back of leaf blade (leaves “peltate”)
- Flowers tiny, hidden within yellow spathe



### ***Nephrolepis cordifolia* – tuber sword fern**

- Stolons many, often with small buried tubers
- Fronds compound, erect, to 3 ft tall
- Leaflets crowded, with small lobe at bases
- Rachis with hair-like, 2-colored scales
- Fertile & sterile fronds similar in shape, size



### ***Ruellia brittoniana* – Mexican petunia**

- Perennial to 3 ft tall
- Stems mostly erect, with swollen nodes
- Leaves opposite, to 11 in, with pointed tips
- Flowers prominent, purple to white
- Fruit a 1-in capsule with many brown seeds



### ***Solanum viarum* – tropical soda apple**

- Bushy perennial to 6 ft tall
- Stems with scattered, small, hooked prickles
- Leaves alternate, angle-lobed, velvety
- Flowers white with recurved petals
- Mature fruits leathery skinned, yellow



## NOTES