

Carrotwood Lookout

Chris Lockhart

Carrotwood (*Cupaniopsis anacardioides*) is a popular landscape tree that has been planted in Florida since the early 1980s. By 1990, reports began to surface that carrotwood had escaped cultivation and could pose a serious threat to natural areas — yes folks, it looks like we have another invasive exotic plant. So far, carrotwood has been reported in the following habitats: mangrove, coastal hammock, coastal strand, scrub, and pine flatwoods.

What does carrotwood look like? Leaves are pinnately compound, with two to four leaflets as seedlings, and usually six to eight leaflets in saplings and mature trees. Leaflets are elliptic or obovate, 4.5 to 19 cm long, have entire margins but tend to be wavy in mature leaflets, and often have an indented apex. The petiolule is often swollen where it attaches to the midrib of the leaf.

What can you do? Keep an eye out for wild carrotwood seedlings and saplings in natural areas. Report them to me at the address below, indicating the location (including county), habitat, population (few or many), and any nearby plants you recognize. If you find any wild carrotwood trees five feet tall or taller, break off a small branch for a voucher specimen, put it in a manilla envelope, and mail it (please don't use plastic bags).

This information is part of a collaborative study on carrotwood with Dr. Dan Austin, FAU, Ed Freeman, Sarasota County, and Bill Jones, Collier County. Thanks from all of us for any scout reports you send in.

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