

## ONE MAN'S WEED

by John Pancoast  
illustration by Wes Jurgens

Locust berry, *Byrsonima cuneata*, is an easy-to-grow, tropical shrub that should be used by more native plant fanciers. During the spring and early summer, it produces a myriad of flowers that change color from white to blush and pink. The berrylike fruit is small, less than a quarter of an inch wide. It is a slow grower, growing about a foot a year. It grows best in loose soil similar to those in the limestone ridge areas of South Dade County. It has few pests but does not tolerate cold weather.

This plant may become a small tree, up to 30 feet high after many years. In your garden, you may want to use it as an accent plant because the leaves grow in clusters that have been compared to schools of fish. If it is massed in a bed, expect some variation in growth habit because nurseries grow it from seed.

It is native to the pinelands of southern Dade County and the Keys, where it grows in pockets in the limestone soils. This plant resembles other members of the Malpighia family such as Barbados cherry and dwarf "holly" which have already found homes in our gardens. In common with these plants, it has opposite, simple leaves. As is characteristic of the family, locust berry has flowers with five sepals containing two glands and five, distinctly clawed petals.

The Malpighia family, which is found primarily in the American tropics, contains about 800 species of which 100 are found in the genus *Byrsonima*.

from *Tillandsia*, Dade Chapter



## Florida's State Champion Bald Cypress Tree

Where: Between Sanford and Orlando on U.S. Highway 17-92  
Dedicated in 1929 by Former President Calvin Coolidge

Before Columbus discovered America, yes, even before our savior was born, probably back in the days of King Tut, 3500 years ago, a little bald cypress tree started reaching for the sky and sending its roots into the soil of central Florida. And through all the years of Spanish, British and American colonization stood this majestic cypress, known as FLORIDA'S BIG TREE: 125 feet high, 47 feet around at the base, with a diameter of 17 1/2 feet. It is Florida's principal rival of giant California redwood trees, supposed to be the oldest and largest tree of its kind in the United States.

from *Coccoloba Jam*, Coccoloba Chapter

