

CUBAN SNAKE-BARK

Colubrina cubensis var. *floridana* (Jacq.)

Brongn.

Synonyms: *Ceanothus cubensis* Lam.,
misapplied; *Rhamnus cubensis* Jacq.

Family: Rhamnaceae (buckthorn)

FNAI Ranks: G2G3T1/S1

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Endangered



Gil Nelson

Field Description: Evergreen **shrub or small tree** to 5 - 8 m tall. **Leaves** 5 - 10 cm long, alternate, simple, leathery, oblong to long-oval, both upper and lower surfaces hairy; leaf tips rounded or bluntly pointed, margins shallowly and irregularly scalloped, veins on upper surface depressed. **Flowers** tiny, with 5 hooded yellow petals on a fleshy disk and 5 green sepals; in stalked clusters in angle of leaf and stem. **Fruit** black, fleshy, round, 3-lobed, splitting when dry.

Similar Species: Latherleaf (*Colubrina asiatica*), an invasive exotic species, has toothed leaf margins and 3 main conspicuous leaf veins.

Related Rare Species: This species is distinguished from two other state-endangered species, soldierwood (*Colubrina elliptica*) and greenheart (*Colubrina arborescens*), by hairs on both leaf surfaces and by its furrowed veins. Soldierwood has soft leaves with marginal glands; greenheart has rusty hairs on its twigs. Both of these species occur in rockland hammocks in Dade and Monroe counties.

Cuban snake-bark

Colubrina cubensis var. *floridana*

Habitat: Edges of rockland hammocks and pine rocklands of the Miami Rock Ridge and Everglades Keys.

Best Survey Season: Flowers and fruits nearly year round; leaves are distinctive all year.

Range-wide Distribution: FL (Dade County and possibly Monroe County Keys), Bahamas.

Conservation Status: Cuban snakebark occurs in 5 Dade County parks and in Everglades National Park.

Protection and Management: Control exotic pest plants. Allow fires in pine rockland to burn into edges of hammocks. Avoid placing firebreaks in pineland - hammock transition zones.

References: Coile 2000, IRC 1999, Nelson 1996, Tomlinson 1980, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

