

## RHACOMA

*Crossopetalum rhacoma* Crantz

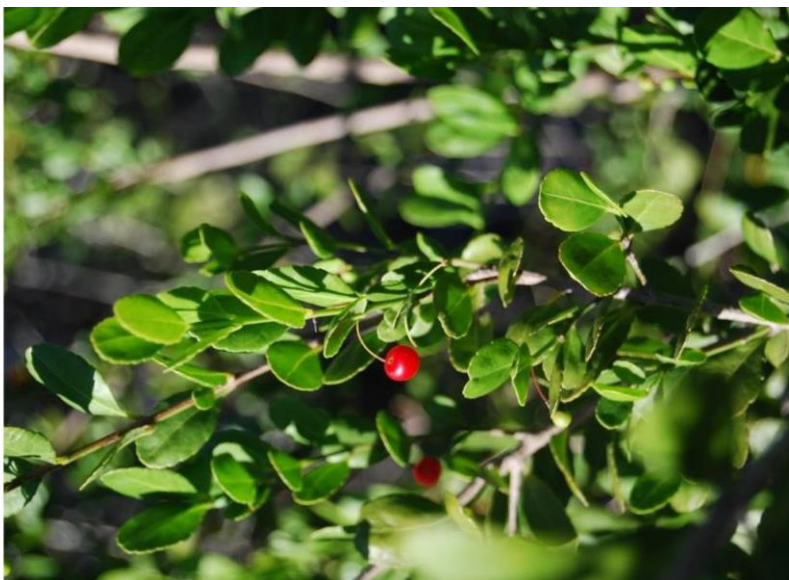
**Synonyms:** none

**Family:** Celastraceae (bittersweet)

**FNAI Ranks:** G5/S3

**Legal Status:** US-none FL-Threatened

**Wetland Status:** US-FACW\*+ FL-FAC



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**Field Description:** This is an erect and somewhat delicate appearing, evergreen, woody shrub or small tree rarely seen to 20 feet, with a 10 foot height more common. It has a slender trunk, smooth light brown bark and slender limbs which have a mild arched/drooping habit. Leaves are light green, approximately 1 inch, obovate (oblong to ovate), mostly opposite, and have lightly crenulate margins and rounded or slightly notched tips. The loose axillary clusters of pale, reddish-tinged, greenish flowers, each about 1/32 inch (the subtle color is difficult to see), have slender, relatively long stalks. The fruit is a bright red, ¼ inch round berry.

**Similar Species:** False boxwood (*Gyminda latifolia*), state-endangered, somewhat resembles maidenberry. False boxwood has black or dark blue fruits, and opposite leaves with entire or obscurely crenulate-serrate margins. This species occurs in Miami-Dade and Monroe Keys Counties.

**Related Rare Species:** Christmas berry (*Crossopetalum ilicifolium*), state-threatened, has leaf margins that are spinose instead of entire to crenulate.

**Habitat:** Rockland hammocks and pinelands and higher portions of rock barrens. Also may grow on ruderal fill with other woody species.

**Best Survey Season:** All year.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Native to South Florida, the West Indies, Mexico, and Central America.

**Conservation Status:** Listed state-threatened and tracked as vulnerable, this species is vouchered from just three counties in South Florida.

**Protection and Management:** Relatively widespread in southern Florida, particularly on coastal hammock margins and occasionally in pine rocklands. Locally abundant in Florida Keys in hammock margins. Protect habitat from clearing and development. Eradicate invasive plants as necessary.

**References:** Tomlinson 1980, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011, Little 1979.