

WEST INDIAN FALSE BOXWOOD

Gyminda latifolia ssp. *latifolia* (Sw.) Urban

Synonyms: *Myginda latifolia* Sw.;
Crossopetalum latifolium (Sw.) Kuntze

Family: Celastraceae (bittersweet)

FNAI Ranks: G4TNR/S2

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Endangered



Gil Nelson

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Field Description: Shrub or small tree to 10 m, bark gray to reddish-brown, flaking in long thin strips. Young twigs square. Leaves 2 - 40 cm long, evergreen, opposite, simple; tips blunt, rounded, or notched; margins entire or slightly toothed with a thickened, translucent rim; veins inconspicuous; not aromatic. Female and male flowers on separate trees, in small clusters usually with 7 greenish-white, 4-petaled flowers. Fruit round or oval, black.

Similar Species: Many tropical hammock shrubs such as bolly (*Guapira discolor*) and the stoppers (*Eugenia* spp.) have leathery, opposite (but often aromatic) leaves with inconspicuous veins. False boxwood is distinguished by square twigs and non-aromatic leaves with blunt tips and thickened margins.

Related Rare Species: Maidenberry (*Crossopetalum rhacoma*), state-endangered, resembles false boxwood. It has red flowers and fruits, and leaves mostly opposite (sometimes alternate or whorled) with notched tips and toothed margins. It occurs in pine rocklands and hammocks.

Habitat: Tropical hardwood hammocks of the middle FL Keys.

Best Survey Season: Flowers spring - fall, fruits all year.

West Indian false boxwood

Gyminda latifolia ssp. latifolia

Range-wide Distribution: Monroe County Keys, FL; Mexico, West Indies.

Conservation Status: Fewer than eight populations remain; four are in parks or refuges.

Protection and Management: Protect remaining fragments of hardwood hammock from development. Control invasive plant species.

References: Coile 2000, Correll and Correll 1982, IRC 1999, Nelson 1996, Tomlinson 1980, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

