

MYRTLE-OF-THE-RIVER

Myrcia zuzygium (L.) A.R. Lourenço & E. Lucas

Synonyms: *Myrtus zuzygium* L.; *Calypttranthes zuzygium* (L.) Sw.

Family: Myrtaceae (myrtle)

FNAI Ranks: G4/S2

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Endangered



Gil Nelson

Field Description: Shrub or small tree with distinctive forked **branching** pattern. **Leaves** 4 - 6 cm long, evergreen, smooth, opposite, simple, entire, oval with short tapering tips, midvein conspicuously raised, tiny glandular dots on both surfaces; leaves have a strong odor when crushed. **Flowers** in small clusters on long stalks arising in the angle of leaf and stem; there are no petals, but many white, showy stamens; **flower buds** open by way of a hinged "lid" in the calyx. **Fruit** a round, waxy black berry with rim.

Similar Species: Lidflower (*Myrcia aromatica*) has the same distinctive flower buds but its leaves are hairy and lack the raised midvein. Stoppers (*Eugenia* spp.) have similar leaves and forked branches but their flowers have petals.

Related Rare Species: See redberry stopper (*Eugenia confusa*) and devil's smooth-claw (*Pisonia rotundata*) in this guide.

Habitat: Rockland hammocks, coastal berms.

Best Survey Season: Spring-summer; early summer and fall, but leaves and branching pattern are distinctive all year.

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Myrcia zuzygium

Range-wide Distribution: Florida, Bahamas, Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico.

Conservation Status: Found in 5 parks and preserves, where it is sometimes locally abundant.

Protection and Management: Preserve remaining rockland hammocks by purchase or conservation easement. Eradicate exotic pest plants.

References: Coile 2000, Correll and Correll 1982, IRC 1999, Nelson 1994, Nelson 1996, Tomlinson 1980, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

