

BITTER BUSH

Picramnia pentandra Sw.

Synonyms: *Picramnia micrantha* Tulasne;

Picramnia antidesmoides Grisebach

Family: Picramniaceae (bitterbush)

FNAI Ranks: G4G5/S1

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Endangered



Gil Nelson

Field Description: Evergreen **shrub or small tree** to about 6 m tall with yellowish-brown **bark**. **Leaves** 20 - 45 cm long, alternate, with 5 - 9 leathery, entire, pointed leaflets arranged either alternately or oppositely on an unwinged leaf stalk. **Male and female flowers** on separate plants in long, slender, drooping spikes; **flowers** minute, green tinged with red. **Fruit** round or oval, slightly lobed, red turning black.

Similar Species: Several hammock trees and shrubs have compound leaves with an odd number of leaflets on an unwinged stalk, such as Jamaica dogwood (*Piscidia piscipula*) and gumbo limbo (*Bursera simaruba*). Bitterbush is distinguished by leaflets with pale green undersurfaces, yellowish-brown bark, and drooping flower spikes.

Related Rare Species: See Mexican alvaradoa (*Alvaradoa amorhoides*) in this guide.

Habitat: Rockland hammocks.

Best Survey Season: Flowers primarily June - August; leaves and fruits distinctive all year.

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Range-wide Distribution: FL, West Indies, South America.

Conservation Status: Only 3 natural populations are currently known in FL, all in conservation areas. Plants in Lee County are escapes from cultivation.

Protection and Management: Eradicate exotic pest plants. Purchase remaining fragments of rockland hammock and manage for conservation.

References: Coile 2000, Elias 1987, IRC 1999, Nelson 1996, Stevenson 1969, Tomlinson 1980, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

