

BAHAMA MANJACK

Varronia bahamensis (Urb.) Millsp.

Synonyms: *Cordia bahamensis* Urban

Family: Cordiaceae (geiger-tree)

FNAI Ranks: GNR/S1

Legal Status: US-none; FL-none



Bahama manjack in flower. Photo © Keith Bradley.

Field Description: Many branched **shrub** to small **tree** up to 4 m in height. **Bark** is black with whitish lenticels. Leaves alternate and variable, linear to acute in shape, with 4 - 20 mm long petioles. **Leaves** 2 - 10 cm long with a leaf margin that ranges from entire to slightly toothed. **Leaf surfaces** subcoriaceous above and pilose beneath. **Flowers** capitate, heads several to many flowered. **Calyx** pubescent with 4 - 5 lobes. **Corolla** white with 5 petals that are fused into a cup. **Stamens** 5; **ovary** superior, with 4 locules; **fruit** a drupe that turns red at maturity.

Similar Species: The non-native, black sage (*Varronia curassavica*) occurs in disturbed areas in South Florida and has an elongated, rather than capitate, inflorescence

Related Rare Species: Curacao bush (*Varronia humilis*) closely resembles bahama manjack, but has a larger flower, serrated leaves, and occurs in hammocks and coastal berms.

Habitat: Pine rockland

Best Survey Season: Flowering all year

Range-wide Distribution: South peninsular FL (Miami-Dade County); Bahamas.

Conservation Status: Bahama manjack occurs in South Florida and the Bahamas and was originally discovered in Florida in 1979. The 1979 population was subsequently extirpated and not rediscovered in the wild in Florida until 2021. Several introductions have been made using presumably Bahamian germplasm. There is only one wild occurrence in the FNAI database as of January 2025. Two other introduced populations are extant as of 2021, one in Miami-Dade County (Florida City Pineland) and one in Broward County (Hugh Taylor Birch State Park). Threats to Bahama manjack and the pine rockland habitat include habitat fragmentation (by agriculture and development), habitat degradation through fire exclusion, and non-native invasive plants.

Protection and Management: Prescribed fire needs to be applied regularly, approximately every 3 - 7 years to maintain the pine rockland habitat. Invasive plant species in areas with Bahama manjack need to be carefully removed and controlled. As both natural and introduced populations decline, further augmentations with ex situ grown material need to be considered to allow the populations to persist.

References: Gann et al. 2023, Gann et al. 2002, Correll and Correll 1982, Leon Levy Preserve 2024, URS Corporation 2007, Weakley, A. S. and the Southeastern Flora Team 2024