

# *Myrcia neopallens*: Spicewood, Pale Lidflower<sup>1</sup>

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<https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>

This Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ publication is part of a series originally written by Edward F. Gilman. Visit <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/> to learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water resources and environment.

## Introduction

Spicewood (*Myrcia neopallens*) is an upright evergreen shrub to small tree in the myrtle (*Myrtaceae*) family, native to south Florida. It has an oval growth habit and reaches a spread of 10 feet and height of 15 feet (Figure 1). Its leaves, which have a unique spicy fragrance, give this plant its popular common name, spicewood. Leaves are small, light green, glossy, and have a pink to red tinge when young (Figure 2). Spicewood produces beige, fragrant flowers from spring through summer (Figure 3). The flowers open when a small lid flips up from the floral cup. The fruits change from green to orange, red, yellow, and then black (Figure 4). The tree and the fruits are appealing to many species of birds; the smaller birds use the tree as cover. Spicewood is a suitable plant for a screen, standard, or hedge. It may also be used as a border in the landscape.



Figure 1. Full form, flowering—*Myrcia neopallens*: spicewood.

Credit: © fredjburton, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC)



Figure 2. Leaf—*Myrcia neopallens*: spicewood.

Credit: R © Octavio Rivera Hernández, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC) via iNaturalist



Figure 3. Flower—*Myrcia neopallens*: spicewood.  
Credit: Ryan Fessenden



Figure 4. Fruit—*Myrcia neopallens*: spicewood.  
Credit: © Alcides L. Morales-Pérez, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC) via iNaturalist

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Myrcia neopallens* (aka *Myrcia aromatica*)

**Previous scientific name(s):** this species is currently undergoing taxonomic reclassification; *Calyptranthes pallens* (synonym); *Myrcia pallens* (synonym); *Myrcia chytraculia* var. *Pauciflora* (synonym)

**Pronunciation:** mere-SEA-ah knee-OH-pal-lens

**Common name(s):** spicewood, pale lidflower

**Family:** *Myrtaceae*

**Plant type:** tree; shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10A through 11B (Figures 5 and 6)

**Planting month for zones 10 and 11:** year-round

*Myrcia neopallens*: Spicewood, Pale Lidflower

## USDA Hardiness Zones 10A-11A

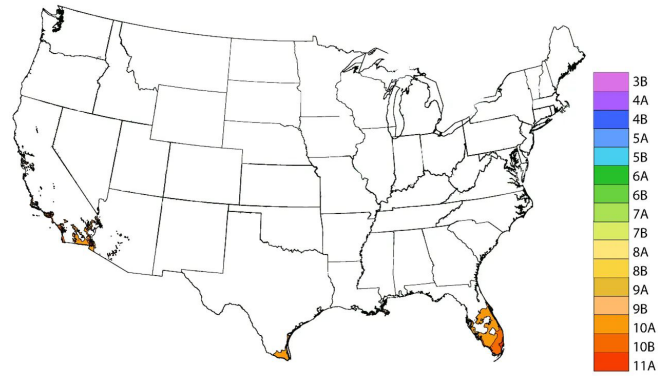


Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting zone—USDA Hardiness Zones 10A-11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.

Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit

<https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> for specific zone information.

## USDA Hardiness Zones 10A-11A

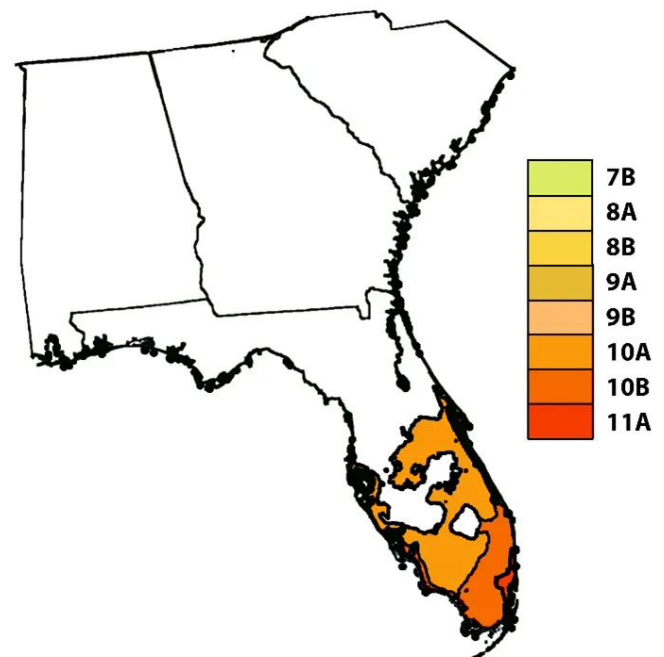


Figure 6. Shaded area represents potential planting zone in the SE Region—USDA Hardiness Zones 10A-11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.

Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit

<https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> for specific zone information.

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Uses:** trained as a standard; screen; border; espalier; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; superior hedge

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

## Description

**Height:** 10 to 15 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 10 feet

**Plant habit:** oval

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** white; beige

**Flower characteristic:** flowering; summer flowering; fall flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval

**Fruit length:** less than 1 inch

**Fruit cover:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** red; yellow; black

**Fruit characteristic:** attracts birds

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

**Current year stem/twig color:** brown

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in partial shade; plant grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** occasionally wet; acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** low to moderate

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

## Other

**Roots:** usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** evergreen foliage

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## Use and Management

Spicewood prefers a full sun to light shade location in the landscape. It is adaptable to many soils and is moderately drought tolerant. However, this plant grows best in moist to wet areas. This plant is native to the coastal hammocks of south Florida, and has low tolerance to direct salt spray, but moderate tolerance of aerosolized salt.

The fruit attracts birds to the landscape, and smaller birds utilize the tree for shelter. This plant is threatened in Florida and should be acquired from nurseries with appropriate licensure. Spicewood may be used as a specimen or can be clipped into a hedge or maintained as a foundation plant. It can be trained into a small multi-trunk tree.

## Design Considerations

Spicewood is a versatile native evergreen for central and south Florida, prized for its fine texture and dense, glossy foliage. Its primary design use is as a screen or hedge; it responds exceptionally well to shearing for a formal look but can also be left unpruned to form a dense, informal barrier. The ability to easily manage its size makes it an excellent foundation plant, or it can be pruned into an

elegant multi-trunk tree (10–15 feet) that showcases its smooth, mottled bark, perfect for patios and courtyards.

In garden design, use its fine-textured foliage as a dark green backdrop. It provides a beautiful contrast to the coarse fronds of coontie (*Zamia integrifolia*) or silver saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens* 'Cinerea') and allows the colors of perennials like dwarf firebush (*Hamelia patens* 'Compacta') to stand out. In a mixed border, it serves as the evergreen "bones" of the design when layered with other natives like Simpson's stopper (*Myrcianthes fragrans*) and wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*).

Beyond its structure, spicewood offers significant wildlife and sensory benefits. Fragrant white flowers attract numerous pollinators, the subsequent berries are a valuable food source for birds, and the leaves release a pleasant, spicy aroma when crushed.

## Pests and Diseases

No pest or disease issues of major concern.

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