

## CUBAN SNAKE-BARK

*Colubrina cubensis* var. *floridana* (Jacq.) Brongn.

**Synonyms:** *Ceanothus cubensis* Lam.,  
misapplied; *Rhamnus cubensis* Jacq.

**Family:** Rhamnaceae (buckthorn)

**FNAI Ranks:** G2G3T1/S1

**Legal Status:** US-none FL-Endangered

**Wetland Status:** US-none+ FL-UPL



Gil Nelson

**Field Description:** Evergreen **shrub or small tree** to 25 feet tall. **Leaves** 2 - 4 inches long, alternate, simple, leathery, oblong to long-oval, both upper and lower surfaces hairy; leaf tips rounded or bluntly pointed, margins shallowly and irregularly scalloped, veins on upper surface depressed. **Flowers** tiny, with 5 hooded yellow petals on a fleshy disk and 5 green sepals; in stalked clusters in angle of leaf and stem. **Fruit** black, fleshy, round, 3-lobed, splitting when dry.

**Similar Species:** Latherleaf (*Colubrina asiatica*), an invasive exotic species, has toothed leaf margins and 3 main conspicuous leaf veins.

**Related Rare Species:** This species is distinguished from two other state-endangered species, soldierwood (*Colubrina elliptica*) and greenheart (*Colubrina arborescens*), by hairs on both leaf surfaces and by its furrowed veins. Soldierwood

## Cuban snake-bark

*Colubrina cubensis* var. *floridana*

has soft leaves with marginal glands; greenheart has rusty hairs on its twigs. Both of these species occur in rockland hammocks in Dade and Monroe counties.

**Habitat:** Edges of rockland hammocks and pine rocklands of the Miami Rock Ridge and Everglades Keys.

**Best Survey Season:** Flowers and fruits nearly year round; leaves are distinctive all year.

**Range-wide Distribution:** FL (Dade County and possibly Monroe County Keys), Bahamas.

**Conservation Status:** Cuban snakebark occurs in 5 Dade County parks and in Everglades National Park.

**Protection and Management:** Control exotic pest plants. Allow fires in pine rockland to burn into edges of hammocks. Avoid placing firebreaks in pineland - hammock transition zones.

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