

# Pest Alert

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
Division of Plant Industry

## ***Ardisia crenata*, coral ardisia, Hen's Eyes, Scratch Throat, Coralberry Ardisia a Recently Listed State Noxious Weed**

**Patti J. Anderson**, [Patti.Anderson@FreshFromFlorida.com](mailto:Patti.Anderson@FreshFromFlorida.com), Botanist, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry

**Richard E. Weaver, Jr.**, Emeritus Botanist, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry

**INTRODUCTION:** The perennial, low-growing shrub, *Ardisia crenata* Sims (Myrsinaceae), has been added to the Florida Noxious Weed and Invasive Species List. This plant was proposed for listing and evidence was presented to the Noxious Weed Review Committee. Numerous ecological studies and weed assessments by the United States Department of Agriculture and the University of Florida provided information. *Ardisia crenata* is also listed by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council as an invasive species that has altered natural plant communities.

The committee found that the species exhibited the following invasive characteristics:

- shade tolerance, allowing the species to form dense stands in forest understories
- seed dispersal by birds and other animals over wide areas
- cultivars selected for characteristics that increase the plant's invasive potential, such as increased fruit and seed production along with denser leaves and branches that block sunlight from seedlings of other species
- vigorous resprouting from starch-rich roots

Based on the assessments of the invasion of natural areas by this species, *A. crenata* is now included on the list of regulated plants in Florida. It is unlawful to introduce, multiply, possess, move or release any noxious weed or invasive plant regulated by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, except under permit issued by the department.

**IDENTIFICATION:** This species is a multi-stemmed shrub up to 1.8 m (6 ft) tall, but usually shorter. The leaves are alternate, elliptic, evergreen, glossy, up to 20 cm (about 8 in) long, and have conspicuously crenate (scalloped) margins with nodules in the crenations (Fig. 1). The flowers grow in the axils of the leaves in dense, drooping, rounded clusters and have small white or pale pink petals. The attractive fruits (Fig. 2) are bright red when ripe, round, about 8 mm (1/3 in) in diameter, in dense drooping clusters, persisting through the winter.

**SIMILAR SPECIES IN FLORIDA:** Five other species of *Ardisia* occur in Florida, but only coral ardisia has leaves with undulate crenate margins and red (occasionally white or pink) fruit.

**DISTRIBUTION:** In Florida, the shrub is usually found in rich and moist, often dense woods in the central and eastern Panhandle, from Holmes County to Jefferson County and the peninsula from Alachua County south to Lee and Palm Beach counties. This species has also escaped into scrub, sandhill and maritime habitats. Coral ardisia is native to temperate and tropical Asia, from Japan to northern India, but has been widely introduced in other areas as an ornamental and has become naturalized in Alabama, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana and Texas as well as Florida.



**Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**  
**Adam H. Putnam, Commissioner**



**Fig. 1.** *Ardisia crenata*, coral ardisia, showing crenate leaf margin with nodules. Photography credit: Michael Meisenburg, UF/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants.



**Fig. 2.** *Ardisia crenata*, coral ardisia, red fruit. Photography credit: Michael Meisenburg, UF/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants.

**ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE:** Dense stands of coral ardisia that carpet forest understories shade out seedlings of native ground covers and thereby alter native plant communities and forest regeneration processes. This species produces a heavy crop of fruit with seeds that remain viable over several months on the plant and germinate at a rate of 84–98% in a range of soil types. In addition, this species spreads by resprouting after fire or stem damage.

**DETECTION AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES:** Control by removal of stems is limited by the ability of plants to resprout from roots. The University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension has numerous publications with information about control of invasive plant pests (Langeland *et al.* 2011; Sellers *et al.* 2013.).

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** This species has been known by several earlier names that are no longer accepted, including the following:

- *Ardisia crenulata* Lodd.
- *Ardisia lentiginosa* Ker Gawl.
- *Bladhia crenata* (Sims) H. Hara.

For more information: <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Plant-Industry/Bureaus-and-Services/Bureau-of-Entomology-Nematology-Plant-Pathology/Botany/Noxious-Weeds/Ardisia-crenata-coral-ardisia>

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