

# *Ardisia elliptica* Thunb.



**Common Name:** Shoebuttan ardisia

**Synonymy:** *A. polycephala* Wall., *A. solanacea* Roxb., *A. humilis* Vahl.

**Origin:** India, China, Southeast Asia

**Botanical Description:** Evergreen, glabrous shrub or small tree to 5 m (17 ft) tall, with smooth stems and new foliage often reddish. Leaves alternate, to 20 cm (8 in) long, oblong to oval, fleshy, leathery, gland-dotted below, with margins entire. Flowers in axillary clusters, star shaped, 13 mm (0.5 in) wide, with mauve-colored petals. Fruit a rounded drupe, 6 mm (< 1 in) wide, red turning to black when ripe, with white juicy flesh.

**NOTE:** Differs from the native marlberry, *Ardisia escallonioides* Schlecht. & Cham., and native myrsine, *Rapanea punctata* (Lam.) Lundell (*Myrsine floridana* A. DC.), by its larger growth habit and conspicuous axillary clusters of mauve flowers.

**Ecological Significance:** Classified as a common weed in Hawaii (Holm et al. 1979). Naturalized in Jamaica, forming secondary thickets in moderately wet places (Adams 1972). Introduced to Florida for ornament by 1900 (Gordon and Thomas 1997). Noted as escaping cultivation in south Florida (Small 1933, Morton 1976, Austin 1978). In Miami-Dade County, now abundant in hammocks, old fields, disturbed wetlands, and tree islands in marshes; forming dense single-species stands in forest understories and crowding

out native plants (R. Hammer, Miami-Dade Parks Department, Castellow Hammock Nature Center, Miami, FL, 1996 pers. comm.). Also invading cypress and mangrove areas along the New River in Broward County (e.g., Secret Woods preserve). Has become a target of eradication by natural resource managers for Miami-Dade and Broward county parks and Everglades National Park (M. McMahon, Biological and Environmental Consulting, 1996 pers. comm.).

**Distribution:** Common in the East Indies, naturalized in Hawaii, the Caribbean, and Florida. Reported only for Miami-Dade County in 1965 (Lakela and Craighead 1965). In Florida, documented as invading coastal berms, matitime hammocks, hardwood hammocks, mesic flatwoods, prairie hammocks, cabbage palm hammocks, strand swamps, and ruderal communities. Documented by herbarium specimens in Brevard, St. Lucie, Martin, Collier, Broward, and Miami-Dade counties (Wunderlin and Hansen 2004). Reported in natural areas from Pinellas, Lee, Monroe, and Palm Beach counties (FLEPPC 2005).

**Life History:** Flowers and fruits all year (Long and Lakela 1971). Seed dispersal aided by bird consumption of fruits (R. Hammer, Miami-Dade County Parks, 1996 pers. comm.). Berries are edible (Morton 1974).