

Identification:

Brazilian pepper is a multi-trunked shrub or tree with fast-growing, arching and crossing branches. It can grow to 40 feet tall, forming thickets or dense, single species stands (monocultures).

Leaves are compound, which means each leaf has numerous (usually 7–9, but may have 3–15) leaflets with finely toothed margins. Leaves are alternate, oblong to elliptical and glossy green. Crushed leaves smell peppery or like turpentine.

Brazilian pepper plants flower from late summer through November. The female plants produce thousands of red berries that mature by December, which are then eaten by birds, raccoons, opossums and other wildlife. Animals are the chief means of seed dispersal.

Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) is not a true pepper and is botanically unrelated to the black pepper plant (*Piper nigrum*).

Where does it grow?

Unfortunately, Brazilian pepper grows just about anywhere and in all types of soil. This pest plant invades residential and urban landscapes as well as undisturbed areas. In Florida, you can find this plant invading interstate and roadway ditches, power lines, freshwater marshes and mangrove-lined shores.



Photo: FDEP

Brazilian pepper shown in bloom (above) and with red berries (below right). The Brazilian pepper plant behind the cabbage palm (below left) has neither flowers nor berries.

Don't remove the wrong plant!

Many Florida trees and shrubs are evergreen (their leaves remain on the plant all year) and many native plant species grow near Brazilian pepper. From a distance, many plants look alike, so be sure you identify the target plant before using control measures. Look for the compound leaf and the berries (only on female plants) and if still in doubt, crush leaflets and sniff for the turpentine smell.

Other common names for the Brazilian pepper are:

Florida holly and the Christmasberry tree. Guess what? This plant is not from Florida and it's not a holly, either! The bright red berries that mature by December give the plant these common names.

It's the law: Possession of Brazilian pepper with the intent to sell or plant is illegal in Florida without a special permit.

For more information:

University of Florida IFAS County Extension Office: <http://solutionsforyourlife.com/map> (click on your county or search for "Brazilian pepper" at top of page)

Florida Department of Environmental Protection: <http://www.dep.state.fl.us> (under the index, click on "Invasive Plants")

Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council: <http://www.fleppc.org>

Southwest Florida Water Management District: <http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us> (search for "Invasive species")

ECO-PRO Environmental Education: <http://www.eco-pros.com> (click on "non-native species")

Tampa Bay Estuary Program: <http://www.tbep.org/tips/brazilian.html>

Florida Native Plant Society: <http://www.fnps.org>



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Brazilian Pepper

Identify and Eliminate this Pest Plant



Brazilian Pepper is a pest plant.

Brazilian pepper is native to Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay—not Florida!

Florida has no natural predators to keep this plant in control. It spreads quickly and chokes out native Florida plants. Due to its arching and intertwining branches, very few plants grow beneath the Brazilian pepper (photo below).



Currently, over 700,000 acres of central and south Florida are infested with this pest plant. That's almost as much land as Hillsborough County, covered with Brazilian pepper! (Hillsborough County is 726,932 acres.)

This plant destroys native habitats, displacing native plants and animals. Property owners are encouraged to remove invasive plant species to keep from infesting nearby natural areas like our parks and preserves.

Brazilian pepper is in the same plant family as poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac!

These plants and others in the *Anacardiaceae* family have sap which may irritate skin. Eating Brazilian pepper berries may cause vomiting (except in birds!) and the pollen may cause respiratory irritation.

After Brazilian pepper is removed (photos at right), the beauty of the natural Florida landscape is revealed.

How to eliminate Brazilian Pepper from your property:

The most effective means of controlling Brazilian pepper is to remove the plant and its roots. However, sometimes these plants are so large that removing the roots is not physically or financially possible for the homeowner. Listed below are control techniques a homeowner may use.

Hand-pulling: Pull up roots of Brazilian peppers. Generally, plants with stem diameters of one inch or smaller may be hand pulled. Use this method instead of chemicals wherever possible.

Cut-stump: Plants should be cut as close to and as level to the ground as possible. Brush away sawdust and apply **water- or oil-soluble** herbicide immediately with a paintbrush to the top surface of the stump. Low-pressure pump sprayers or spray bottles are appropriate herbicide application tools. Continue to cut and apply herbicide as re-sprouts occur.

The best time to cut Brazilian peppers is when they are not fruiting. If Brazilian peppers are cut when fruiting, take care not to spread the seeds, as these seeds will become new Brazilian pepper plants.

Basal Bark: This technique involves treating the plant without cutting or removing it and is most effective on trunks six inches or less diameter. Basal Bark is the most cost effective removal method if you have large numbers of Brazilian pepper plants, since plant removal or cut-stump may be costly. Make sure it is acceptable to leave dying or dead vegetation standing. Apply an **oil-soluble** herbicide to the bark using a low-pressure sprayer or paintbrush. (See “Chemicals you can use” at right.)

Frill or Girdle: This control method is used for thick bark where the basal bark technique will not be effective. Use a sharp implement such as a machete or hatchet to make cuts through the bark near the base of the tree and apply **water- or oil-soluble** herbicide to cuts (using a low-pressure sprayer or paintbrush). “Frill” means to make multiple cuts around the trunk, while “girdle” is to cut completely around the trunk, through the bark.



The photos above and at left show herbicide being applied to cut stumps of Brazilian pepper plants.



Chemicals you can use:

This is not a complete list of available products, nor is it an endorsement by any of the parties mentioned in this brochure. Many of the products listed below are available from home improvement, hardware and farm supply stores or online herbicide dealers.

Glyphosate

Water-soluble. Sold in various container sizes and glyphosate strengths.

Product names: Roundup Pro, Roundup Super Concentrate, Rodeo, Glyphosate Pro II, Glyphosate 4, Accord.

Triclopyr amine.....

Water-soluble. Sold in various container sizes and triclopyr amine strengths.

Product names: Ortho Brush B Gon, Garlon 3A, Spectracide Brush Killer, Renovate 3, Triclopyr 3 SL.

Triclopyr ester.....

Oil-soluble. Sold in various container sizes and triclopyr ester strengths.

Product names: Garlon 4 Ultra, Pathfinder II, Vine-X, Triclopyr 4 EC, Remedy.

Warnings:

- These control methods involve the use of herbicides. Use proper protective gear when sawing and applying the herbicides
- Follow all directions for use on the manufacturer's label of specific herbicide. It's the law!
- Wear gloves, long sleeves and long pants as the sap from this plant may cause skin irritation.
- Carefully check label for chemical applications near or over water.