Introduction

It would be hard to find a more attractive trunk and bark on a small tropical tree. Flowers are borne directly on the smooth, brown bark and are followed by the delicious black fruit. Fruit matures about 3 weeks after flowers emerge. Trees often flower and fruit 5 or more times during the year. Several to many trunks originate from near the ground and slowly ascend in a spreading fashion. The rounded canopy that forms is displayed in a vase shape if some of the lower branches are removed from the tree. The tree grows slowly, but it is well worth the wait for the ornamental and food value gained from this wonderful plant.

General Information

Scientific name: Myrciaria cauliflora
Pronunciation: mer-see-AIR-ree-uh kawl-liff-FLOR-ruh
Common name(s): Jaboticaba
Family: Myrtaceae
Plant type: tree
USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 1)
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: near a deck or patio; espalier
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 12 to 20 feet
Spread: 12 to 18 feet

Plant habit: round
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)
Leaf venation: pinnate; reticulate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: flowers periodically throughout the year

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: black
Fruit characteristic: suited for human consumption

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; showy  
Current year stem/twig color: brown  
Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun  
Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay;  
Drought tolerance: moderate  
Soil salt tolerances: unknown  
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem  
Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive  
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Place this tree in a conspicuous location such as near an entrance, next to a deck or patio or along a walk so it can be enjoyed year round. This remarkable small tree will reap you compliments from friends and passers-by for as long as you have it in the yard. Maintain the area beneath the canopy in a low ground cover or mulch to display the trunk clearly to the ground. This will also allow for easy access to the fruit.

A full sun location is preferable but adequate growth can be maintained in partial shade with direct sun for part of the day. Jaboticaba appears to tolerate a wide range of soil pH and is not picky with regards to soil texture, as long as it drains well.

Pests and Diseases

There do not appear to be significant pest or diseases problems on Jaboticaba.