**Eugenia uniflora** Surinam Cherry¹

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**Introduction**

Surinam cherry is an excellent shrub for screens or hedges, with smooth, shiny, aromatic leaves which are bright red when young. This lends a reddish cast to a clipped hedge during the growing season. The small, thin leaves allow the plant to be sheared easily, and it is often used as a hedge. The plant remains dense all the way to the ground if the top of the hedge is clipped so it stays slightly narrower than the bottom. The small, fragrant, white flowers are followed by one-inch diameter, tasty, ribbed, red berries which are unusually high in vitamin C.

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**General Information**

- **Scientific name:** *Eugenia uniflora*
- **Pronunciation:** yoo-JEE-nee-uh yoo-nif-FLOR-uh
- **Common name(s):** Surinam cherry
- **Family:** Myrtaceae
- **Plant type:** tree
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)
- **Planting month for zone 9:** year round
- **Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round
- **Origin:** not native to North America
- **Uses:** fruit; superior hedge; container or above-ground planter; trained as a standard; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; border
- **Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

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**Figure 1.** *Eugenia uniflora* Surinam cherry.

*Credits: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS*

**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.
**Description**
- **Height:** 8 to 20 feet
- **Spread:** 6 to 15 feet
- **Plant habit:** oval
- **Plant density:** dense
- **Growth rate:** moderate
- **Texture:** fine

**Foliage**
- **Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite
- **Leaf type:** simple
- **Leaf margin:** entire
- **Leaf shape:** ovate
- **Leaf venation:** pinnate
- **Leaf type and persistence:** fragrant
- **Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches
- **Leaf color:** purple or red
- **Fall color:** no fall color change
- **Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**
- **Flower color:** white
- **Flower characteristic:** pleasant fragrance; spring flowering

**Fruit**
- **Fruit shape:** round
- **Fruit length:** less than .5 inch
- **Fruit cover:** fleshy
- **Fruit color:** orange
- **Fruit characteristic:** suited for human consumption; attracts birds

**Trunk and Branches**
- **Trunk/bark/branches:** no thorns; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
- **Current year stem/twig color:** reddish
- **Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

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

**Other**
- **Roots:** usually not a problem
- **Winter interest:** no special winter interest
- **Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** potentially invasive
**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

**Use and Management**
Growing best in full sun and rapidly-draining soil, Surinam cherry has interesting tan-colored, thin, peeling bark and multiple stems, making it a good candidate for training into a small tree for use as a specimen tree. Unfortunately, it is seldom grown in this manner. The natural habit of the plant is an upright spreading form, similar to crape myrtle. Space from two to five feet apart to form a hedge or screen planting.

There are many *Eugenia* species with a range of mature heights and sizes.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

**Pests and Diseases**
Surinam cherry is bothered by scale and caterpillars.

No diseases are of major concern.