



## *Bucida buceras* Black Olive<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

Though commonly called 'black olive tree', this native of the upper Florida Keys (some consider it native, others do not) is not the edible olive we know and love, but does produce a small, black seed-capsule (Fig. 1). Black olive is a 40 to 50-foot-tall evergreen tree with a smooth trunk holding up strong, wind-resistant branches, forming a pyramidal shape when young but developing a very dense, full, oval to rounded crown with age. Sometimes the top of the crown will flatten with age, and the tree grows horizontally. The lush, dark bluish-green, leathery leaves are two to four inches long and clustered at branch tips, sometimes mixed with the 0.5 to 1.5-inch-long spines found along the branches.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Bucida buceras*

**Pronunciation:** bew-SYE-duh bew-SER-azz

**Common name(s):** Black Olive, Oxhorn Bucida

**Family:** *Combretaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** hedge; suitable for growing indoors; wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; reclamation plant; shade tree; specimen; residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

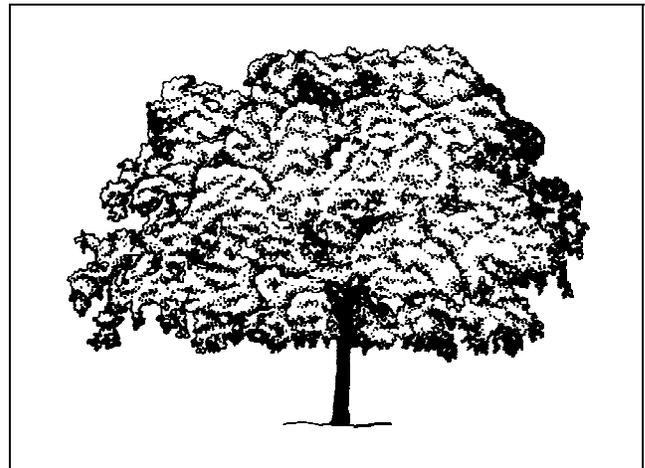


Figure 1. Middle-aged Black Olive.

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 40 to 50 feet

**Spread:** 35 to 50 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** oval; round

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** fine

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate; whorled (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** oblanceolate; obovate

**Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering; summer flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** black

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; thorns are

present on the trunk or branches

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** gray

**Current year twig thickness:** medium; thin

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** high

**Soil salt tolerance:** moderate

### Other

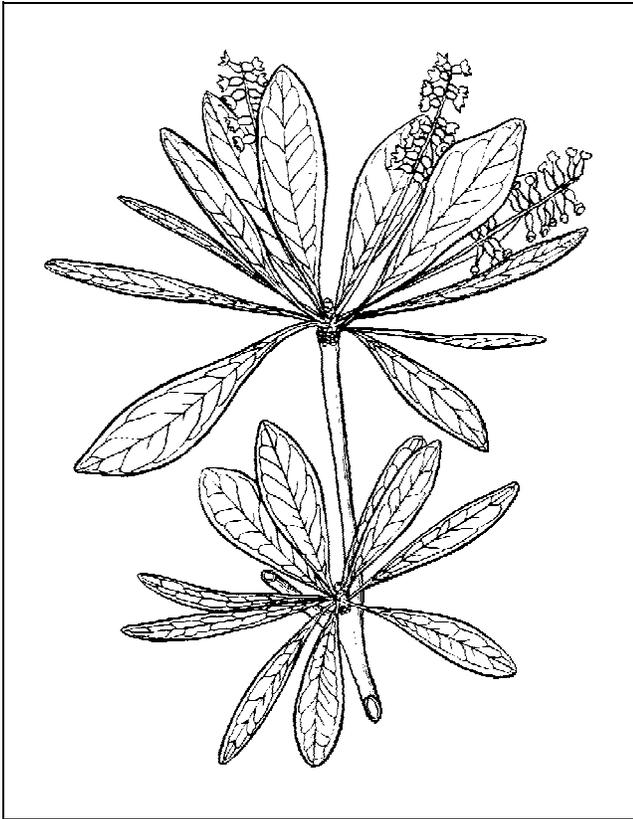
**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests



**Figure 3.** Foliage of Black Olive.

### **Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern but occasionally bothered by sooty mold and bark borer. Eryphide mites cause galls but no control is needed.

### **USE AND MANAGEMENT**

The inconspicuous, small, greenish-yellow flowers are produced in four-inch-long spikes during spring and summer and eventually form the black fruits which, unfortunately, exude a staining tannic acid material which could damage patios, sidewalks, or vehicles parked below. Besides this one drawback, black olive is beautifully suited as a street, shade, or specimen tree for frost-free areas, but is probably overplanted. There are many native trees which could be used in its place, including satin leaf, gumbo-limbo and others.

Black olive grows slowly and should be planted in full sun or partial shade on well-drained, moist soils. Plants may be slightly damaged at 32-degrees F. but are killed at 25-degrees F. Trees may show chlorosis on high pH soils.

Propagation is by seeds (with difficulty) or layering.