



## *Lysiloma bahamensis* Wild-Tamarind<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

Cuban Tamarind is native to South Florida and grows moderately fast, up to 40 to 60 feet tall and 45 feet wide, its slender, short trunk topped with long, somewhat arching branches forming an umbrella-like silhouette (Fig. 1). The pale green, pinnately compound, fern-like leaves are a showy red when young and make a striking contrast, the new and older growth appearing together. Developing into a more open tree with age, Cuban Tamarind makes an ideal shade, park, or seaside planting.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Lysiloma bahamensis*

**Pronunciation:** lye-sih-LOE-muh bah-hah-MEN-sis

**Common name(s):** Wild-Tamarind, Bahama  
*Lysiloma*

**Family:** *Leguminosae*

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

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); 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; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

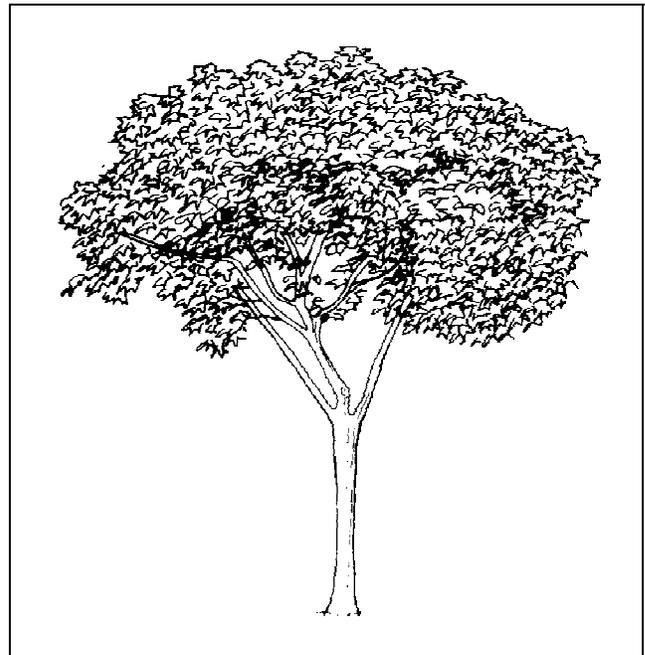


Figure 1. Middle-aged Wild-Tamarind.

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 40 to 60 feet

**Spread:** 30 to 45 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** vase shape; weeping

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** fine

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-366, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### Foliage

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

**Leaf type:** bipinnately compound; even pinnately compound

**Leaflet margin:** entire

**Leaflet shape:** obovate

**Leaflet venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaflet blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

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

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** elongated; pod

**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; showy

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

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

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** green

**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; acidic; alkaline; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

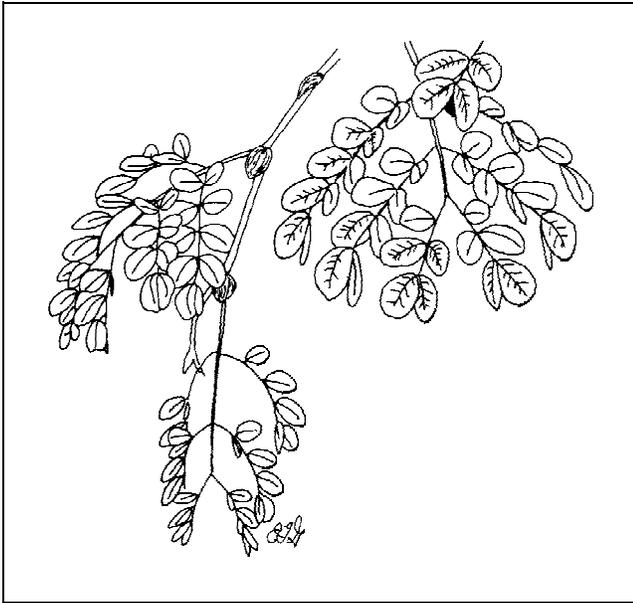


Figure 3. Foliage of Wild-Tamarind.

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** high

**Soil salt tolerance:** good

#### Other

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

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

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

**Pest resistance:** no pests are normally seen on the tree

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

Cities have planted Cuban and Wild Tamarind (*Lysiloma latisiliqua*) along streets with good success. They are probably well suited for this use. Codominant stems form very low on the trunk without proper pruning and training, and branches will droop toward the ground. Specify trees for planting along streets and in parking lots that have a clear trunk to about five feet or more to help avoid this problem. If large branches are allowed to develop below this point, the tree could become disfigured as these branches have to be removed in the future to allow for passage of vehicles and pedestrians. Locate the first permanent branch 6 (preferably 10) or more feet from the ground to allow for clearance. Low branches can be left on the tree if it will be planted in a yard, park or other location where vehicle clearance is not a concern.

Major branches often develop embedded or included bark as they grow at the same rate as the

trunk. They often grow to about the same size as the trunk. This does not appear to be a problem on small trees but could encourage branch breakage as the tree grows older. Try to keep the major branches from growing larger than about two-thirds the diameter of the trunk.

The small, white flowers appear in late spring as fuzzy globes and are followed by four to six-inch-long, thin, flattened, red/brown seedpods which disperse their brown seeds in fall.

Cuban Tamarind should be grown in full sun or partial shade on rich, well-drained soil and is sensitive to freezing weather. The tree is also highly drought- and salt-tolerant making it ideal for use in seaside landscapes.

Propagation is by seed.

#### Pests

Stem galls.

#### Diseases

Rust diseases.