

Nature Notes

...from Sharon

The White Stopper is in the Myrtle family and can grow up to 25 feet tall. The White Stopper is one of the four varieties of Stoppers native to sandy coastal areas of South Florida. It is an evergreen, having small, shiny opposite leaves that emerge bright red turning a medium green several weeks later. The underside of the leaf is a lighter green, as shown in the photo below.



Stoppers grow well in a variety of light levels and they tolerate different types of well-drained soils. These plants are salt and drought tolerant.

Take a walk south from the second parking area and you will smell the sweet, fragrant flowers before you see them on the west side of the road. They have small clusters of white axillary flowers during the warm months. Once they start flowering, the petals don't last long, so go soon to experience these at the Preserve.



After flowering, they produce small berries that ripen from white to red to black. The edible fruits are drupe-like, juicy berries that are globose or pear-shaped and very showy.

This plant is also said to have another aroma—from its leaves. It comes from the evaporation of volatile oils in the leaves and tends toward musky, not sweet. It has an organic, earthy, skunk-like smell. It has sometimes been referred to as the skunk tree because of this odor. I did not notice this aroma from these plants when I was by there the last few weeks. However, I have witnessed—or should I

say smelled—this on one of the trails at the south end of the Preserve, just before you get to Wiggins Pass.

The strong straight limbs were used for bows and various items by indigenous people. In the Caribbean, it was used for roof rafters and animal traps. Medicinally, it was used to treat colds and diarrhea.

White Stopper
(*Eugenia axillaris*)

