Firebush is a hardy, fast-growing and showy evergreen shrub to small tree. It is multi-stemmed and spreading with a rounded form. It produces clusters of bright orange to red tubular flowers that are filled with nectar. The blooms vary in length, attracting both butterflies and hummingbirds. Leaves are elliptical to ovate with entire margins and pointed tips. Petioles are usually reddish. Fruits are small green berries that turn red and then purplish-black as they mature. Borne in clusters, the berries are plentiful and are eaten by a variety of birds and small mammals. They are also edible to humans (although the taste is not particularly desirable). Leaves, stems and flowers have many medicinal properties including anti-inflammatory, analgesic and diuretic treatments.

Firebush occurs naturally in hardwood hammocks and coastal and upland forests. It typically blooms spring through fall but can bloom year-round in warmer climes.

**Family:** Rubiaceae (Madder or coffee family)

**Native range:** Central and southern peninsula

To see where natural populations of Firebush have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

**Hardiness:** Zones 8b–11

**Soil:** Dry, sandy, somewhat alkaline soils

**Exposure:** Full shade to full sun

**Growth habit:** up to 10’ tall, with 3–6’+ spread

**Propagation:** Seed, transplanting of suckers

**Garden tips:** Firebush is excellent for borders along boardwalks, paths, and sidewalks. It is fast-growing and easy to maintain. It will adapt to a variety of conditions and is even slightly salt tolerant. The foliage is more attractive in shady situations, but it flowers best in full sun.

Firebush is often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.