

Gopher apple

(*Licania michauxii*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Gopher apple is a hardy, low-growing, woody perennial shrub. It produces erect, terminal cymes of small, creamy white flowers. Leaves are leathery, stiff and have fine but obvious veins. They can grow up to 4 inches long and are alternately arranged. Fruits are drupes that are whitish to brown in color, ovoid to ellipsoid in shape, and 1-2" long. They are edible to humans (although they are nearly tasteless) and other mammals, but are a preferred food of gopher tortoises. Flowers are attractive to many insects.

Gopher apple can bloom year-round. It occurs naturally in sandhills, pine flatwoods, scrubby flatwoods and scrub. It is often confused with runner oak, which has a similar growth habit and is found in similar habitats.



Photo by Chris Waltz

Family: Chrysobalanaceae

Native range: Nearly throughout Florida

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

Hardiness: Zones 8–11

Soil: Sandy, well-drained soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: up to 1' tall

Propagation: Seeds, root division

Garden tips: Gopher apple will spread and form colonies by way of underground rhizomes. It works well as a groundcover and can help stabilize dry, sandy soils. It is drought tolerant and fire adapted.

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