

# Locustberry & Florida duskywing Project

**Benefit an imperiled butterfly by  
planting an all-around wonderful shrub!**



**Locustberry** (*Byrsonima lucida*) is a highly ornamental and versatile shrub which can be used in a butterfly garden, as a hedge plant, and as a single specimen plant in a prominent location. It is listed as threatened by the State of Florida and should be used more often.

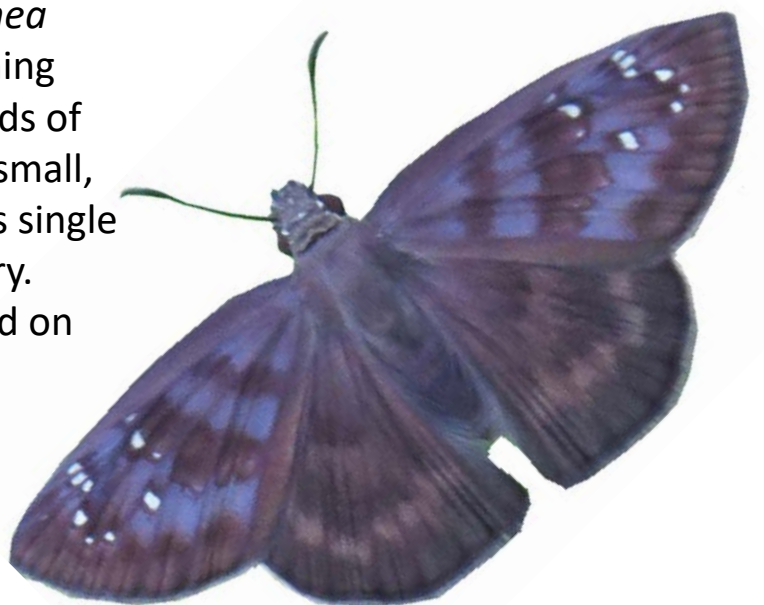
**Description:** Locustberry is a medium/ large shrub to 8 ft (rarely 15 ft), usually as broad as tall. Very showy flowers turn white to pink to red in spring to early summer. Green fruits ripen to brown in early summer.



**Care & Maintenance:** Plant in full sun (at least 6 hours daily) in well-drained rocky or sandy nutrient-poor (not organic) soil. Plants are drought tolerant once established. Growth rate is moderate. Locustberry responds well to pruning (by hand or with a hedge trimmer), which is recommended for denser growth. It is easy to shape and to keep at a desired height.

**By introducing more locustberry plants, our hope is to expand  
the range and numbers of the Florida duskywing butterfly.**

**The Florida duskywing** (*Ephyriades brunnea floridensis*) is a rare and potentially declining butterfly found only in a few pine rocklands of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. This small, fast-flying butterfly can only live where its single larval host plant is present: the locustberry. Hungry Florida duskywing caterpillars feed on locustberry leaves and often hide from predators inside shelters they create by using silk to stitch a few leaves together.





**Identifying the Florida duskywing.** If you find a caterpillar that resembles the photos below and it is feeding on locustberry leaves or hiding in a leaf-shelter, then it is likely the Florida duskywing! Identifying the adults (butterflies) is trickier, due to their similarity to Horace's duskywing, a common species which uses oaks as its larval host plant. Below are some tips for telling the two apart.



**Florida duskywing.** White dots on forewing form a loose circle. At the top, there are 3 adjacent dots that form a line. The butterfly on the left is female; the one on the right is male. Males are darker and can appear almost jet black. Banding is more prominent on females.



**Horace's duskywing.** White dots on forewing don't form a circle. There are 4 adjacent dots that form a line. The butterfly on the left is female; the one on the right is male.

**Other wildlife benefits of locustberry**

- Birds eat the fruits and use the foliage for cover.
- Pollinators visit the flowers, including the wandering centris bee (*Centris errans*), which is the only oil-collecting bee native to South Florida. This fuzzy brown bee gathers oil from specialized glands at the base of the locustberry flower and uses it to build its nest and feed its young.
- Other animals rely on the fruits for their diets, including gopher tortoises and the Florida box turtle (which we know thanks to ecologists in the Liu Lab at Florida International University)



**About this effort:** This program is modeled after the story of the (once nearly extinct) atala butterfly, whose recovery was due in part to the popularity of the coontie plant among South Florida gardeners. **Our goal is to replicate that success with the locustberry and the Florida duskywing.** This program is sponsored by the Daniels Lab at the Florida Museum of Natural History /University of Florida.



**Native Plant Network** – [www.fairchildgarden.org/NPN](http://www.fairchildgarden.org/NPN)  
**Daniels Lab:** <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/daniels-lab>