

Selected Shrubs for Central Florida ¹

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Ornamental shrubs are an important part of the home landscape. Florida homeowners can select from a large variety of available plants. Homeowners and landscape designers must be aware of basic shrub characteristics to make wise selections. Each plant or plant group must serve a useful purpose to achieve a well-designed landscape.

Homeowners often select plants with bright flowers or unusual foliage. Only a limited number of unusual or accent plants can be used effectively in the landscape and their location must be skillfully planned. A complete landscape plan should be developed before the plants are purchased.

Shrubs are selected on the basis of ultimate size, plant form, foliage characteristics, flower color, season of bloom, and adaptation to the planting site. Knowledge of these characteristics allows the designer or home gardener to choose proper plant materials to create the desired landscape. Shrub growth habit is quite variable and can be categorized as broad spreading, spreading, globose, upright spreading, upright or columnar (Figure 1). Foliage characteristics and branching habit determine shrub texture. Flowering shrubs can be selected to provide color in specific areas of the landscape at different times throughout the year. Knowledge of flower

color and season of bloom helps eliminate incompatible color combinations.

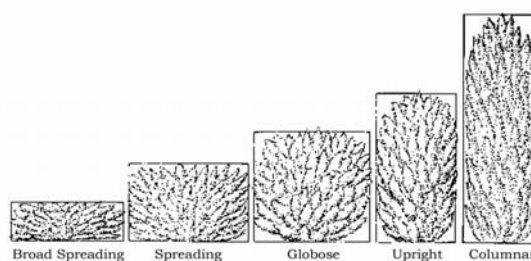


Figure 1. Shrub growth habits.

Shrubs are evaluated by their adaptability to the environmental conditions of the landscape site. Environmental conditions include the amount of sunlight (full sun, partial shade, or shade) and tolerance to salt spray, particularly in coastal areas. Soil characteristics of the site may restrict shrub selection and some shrubs will only thrive if the sites are irrigated and fertilized regularly. Some shrubs tolerate poorly drained soils while others grow best in dry sandy soils.

Plants should be inspected closely before purchase. Shrubs with an unhealthy appearance, or with weak or poorly formed branches should not be purchased because they usually develop into "leggy"

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plants. Each plant should be examined for insects, diseases, and mechanical damage such as scarred, cracked, or peeling trunks and branches. Abnormally small or yellow leaves are an indication of either nutritional disorders, weak root systems, or some improper production or shipping procedures.

The root systems of container-grown plants should be well established, but not tightly root-bound. Roots should be distributed throughout the soil medium and not coiled at the bottom of the pot or protruding outside the container or penetrating into the ground. The soil ball of balled and burlapped (B&B) plants should be intact and moist.

Central Florida includes the area from Leesburg south to Punta Gorda and Fort Pierce. These are general guidelines, and microclimatic factors of given locations may vary.

The following table lists selected shrubs for central Florida. Space does not allow including all the shrubs that could be grown in central Florida. The scientific name, common name, growth habit, estimate of common height, flower color and season, light requirements, soil type preference, degree of salt tolerance and other comments of interest are included. Cultivars of some plant species listed here may differ in growth habit, flower color, foliage characteristics and/or size. This information should help homeowners and landscape horticulturists select appropriate shrubs for specific purposes and locations in their landscapes.

Table 1. Selected shrubs for central Florida.

Scientific Name Common Name	Growth Habit	Common Height in feet	Flower Color	Flower Season	Light Requirements	Soil Type
Small Shrubs						
<i>Buxus microphylla</i> Japanese Boxwood	Globose, compact	3-4	Inconspicuous	---	Partial shade, shade	Fertile, acid
Comments: Tolerates shearing. Nematodes, mites and leaf miners are problems.						
<i>Carissa grandiflora</i> 'Nana' dwarf natal plum	Spreading	3-4	White	Warm season	Full sun	Sandy
Comments: Attractive scarlet fruit. 'Emerald Blanket' and 'Boxwood Beauty' are other dwarf cultivars. Tolerates salt spray.						
<i>Cuphea hyssopifolia</i> Cuphea	Spreading, compact	3-4	Red to white	Summer	Full sun	Fertile
Comments: Susceptible to frost.						
<i>Euphorbia milii</i> Crown of thorns	Spreading	3	Inconspicuous flowers but showy bracts		Full sun	Very well-drained
Comments: Showy red, pink, or cream bracts. Susceptible to frost. Tolerates salt spray.						
<i>Gardenia augusta</i> 'Radicans' prostrate gardenia	Spreading, compact	1-2	White	Spring	Partial shade	Fertile
Comments: Sensitive to nematodes, white fly and sooty mold.						
<i>Ilex cornuta</i> 'Rotunda' dwarf Chinese holly	Spreading	3-4	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun, partial shade	Well-drained, acid
Comments: Multi-spined leaves. Best in groups.						
<i>Ilex vomitoria</i> 'Nana' dwarf yaupon holly	Spreading	3-4	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun, shade	Variety
Comments: Other cultivars include 'Stokes Dwarf' and 'Schellings.' Tolerates salt spray.						
<i>Juniperus chinensis</i> Chinese juniper	Broad, spreading	2-3	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun	Fertile, well-drained
Comments: Cultivars include 'Parsonii' and 'Parsonii Variegata.' Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Juniperus conferta</i> Shore juniper	Broad, spreading	1-2	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun	Fertile, well-drained
Comments: Superior cultivars include 'Blue Pacific' and 'Compacta.' Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Mahonia fortunei</i> Fortune's mahonia	Upright, multi-stemmed	3-4	Yellow	Early spring	Partial shade	Well-drained

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Comments: Thick mounded shrub. Good as a specimen plant.						
<i>Rhododendron obtusum</i> Kurume hybrid azaleas	Spreading	4	Variable	Spring	Partial shade	Acidic
Comments: Variety of colors and growth habits.						
<i>Serissa foetida</i> Serissa	Spreading	2	White	Warm season	Partial shade	Fertile, moist
Comments: Used as edging and foundation plant.						
Medium Shrubs						
<i>Agave americana</i> Century plant	Globose	5-6	Flowers only once		Full sun	Well-drained
Comments: Tolerates poor, sandy soil. 'Marginata' has yellow-white marginal stripes. Tolerates salt spray.						
<i>Allamanda cathartica</i> Golden trumpet	Broad, spreading, climbing	8-10	Yellow	Warm season	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Trained to shrub or vine. Poisonous.						
<i>Aucuba japonica</i> Aucuba	Upright	5-6	Inconspicuous	---	Shade	Fertile, organic
Comments: Multi-stemmed. Variegated cultivars common.						
<i>Breynia disticha</i> Snow bush	Spreading, open	5-6	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun	Light, sandy
Comments: Brightly variegated foliage in several colors. Susceptible to frost.						
<i>Callicarpa americana</i> Beauty berry	Spreading, compact	5-6	Lilac	Spring	Partial shade	Fertile, moist
Comments: Showy magenta fruit in autumn. White fruited selection available.						
<i>Carissa grandiflora</i> Natal plum	Spreading, compact	5-6	White	Warm season	Full sun	Sandy
Comments: Attractive scarlet fruit. Milky sap. Tolerates salt spray.						
<i>Cassia alata</i> Candle bush	Spreading	8	Yellow	Fall	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Susceptible to freeze injury. Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Codiaeum variegatum</i> Croton	Spreading, open	5-6	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun, partial shade	Variety
Comments: Multi-colored leaves; color differs with variety. Cold sensitive. Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						

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<i>Erythrina herbacea</i> Cherokee bean	Upright	5-6	Red	Spring	Partial shade	Fertile
Comments: Deciduous. Showy flowers and bright scarlet seed.						
<i>Euphorbia pulcherrima</i> Poinsettia	Upright, multi-stemmed	8	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun	Well-drained
Comments: Showy red bracts in late fall and winter.						
<i>Fatsia japonica</i> Fatsia	Upright	5-6	Inconspicuous	---	Partial shade	Fertile, acid
Comments: Does well in landscape containers. Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Gardenia augusta</i> Gardenia	Spreading, compact	5-6	White	Spring	Partial shade	Fertile, acid
Comments: Susceptible to nematodes, white fly and sooty mold. Showy spring color.						
<i>Galphimia glauca</i> (<i>Thryallis</i> <i>glauca</i>) Thryallis	Spreading, compact	8	Yellow	Warm season	Full sun, partial shade	Variety
Comments: Plant is injured by temperatures of 28°F (-2°C) or lower.						
<i>Hibiscus rosa-sinensis</i> Chinese hibiscus	Upright, multi-stemmed	6-8	Variable	Warm season	Full sun, partial shade	Moist, fertile
Comments: Many selections and hybrids are available.						
<i>Hydrangea macrophylla</i> Hydrangea	Spreading	5-6	Blue, pink, or white	Late spring	Shade	Fertile, well-drained
Comments: Flower color varies with soil pH.						
<i>Ilex cornuta</i> 'Burfordii Compacta' dwarf burford holly	Spreading	5-6	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun, partial shade	Well-drained, acid
Comments: Not readily infested by scale insects.						
<i>Jasminum mesnyi</i> Primrose jasmine	Broad, spreading, creeping	5-6	Yellow	Late winter	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Mounding growth habit.						
<i>Jasminum multiflorum</i> Downy jasmine	Broad, spreading, sprawling	5-6	White	Warm season	Full sun, partial shade	Variety
Comments: Downy leaf surface. Often used as clipped hedges.						

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Scientific Name Common Name	Growth Habit	Common Height in feet	Flower Color	Flower Season	Light Requirements	Soil Type
<i>Jasminum nitidum</i> Shining Jasmine	Spreading, sprawling	5-6	White	Warm season	Full sun, partial shade	Variety
Comments: Shiny leaf surface. Often used as clipped hedges.						
<i>Juniperus chinensis</i> Chinese juniper	Spreading	6-8	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun	Fertile, well-drained
Comments: Varieties include 'Mint Julep,' 'Heizii' and 'Blue Vase.' Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Leucophyllum frutescens</i> Texas sage	Spreading, compact	5-6	Lavender	Summer	Full sun	Well-drained, sandy
Comments: Good for hot, dry locations. Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Loropetalum chinense</i> Loropetalum	Spreading, compact	6-8	Cream to yellow	Early spring	Partial shade	Fertile, well-drained
Comments: Horizontal branching. Needs frequent watering.						
<i>Mahonia lomarifolia</i> Chinese holly grape	Upright, multi-stemmed	6-8	Yellow	Early spring	Partial shade	Fertile, well-drained
Comments: Good as border plant in formal gardens. Interesting, grape-like fruit.						
<i>Malva viscosus arboreus</i> Turk's cap	Spreading	6-8	Red to white	Warm season	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Susceptible to freeze injury.						
<i>Myrtus communis</i> Myrtle	Spreading, open	5-6	White	Spring	Partial shade	Fertile, well-drained
Comments: 'Microphylla' and 'Variegata' are superior selections.						
<i>Rhododendron simsii</i> Indian hybrid azaleas	Spreading	5-6	Variable	Spring	Partial shade	Fertile, acid, well-drained
Comments: Evergreen.						
<i>Russelia equisetiformis</i> Fire cracker plant	Spreading, weeping	5-6	Red	Summer	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Also called coral plant.						
<i>Severina buxifolia</i> Boxthorn	Spreading, compact	5-6	White	Spring	Full sun, partial shade	Well-drained
Comments: Black berries.						
<i>Tabernaemontana divaricata</i> (<i>Ervatamia coronaria</i>) Crepe Jasmine	Spreading, symmetrical	6-8	White	Warm season	Full sun, partial shade	Variety

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Scientific Name Common Name	Growth Habit	Common Height in feet	Flower Color	Flower Season	Light Requirements	Soil Type
Comments: Fragrant, waxy flowers. Susceptible to hard freezes.						
<i>Tetrapanax papyriferus</i> Rice paper plant	Upright	8	Yellow to white	Warm season	Full sun, partial shade	Variety
Comments: Produces suckers. Susceptible to freeze injury.						
<i>Viburnum suspensum</i> Sandankwa viburnum	Spreading	6-8	White	Spring	Full sun, shade	Fertile
Comments: Easily maintained at smaller sizes.						
<i>Yucca gloriosa</i> Spanish dagger	Upright	6-8	White	Summer	Full sun	Well-drained
Comments: Good for hot, dry locations. Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
Large Shrubs						
<i>Bougainvillea</i> spp. Bougainvillea	Spreading	10-12	Red to white and showy bracts	Warm season	Full sun	Variety, non-alkaline
Comments: Aggressive grower. Informal character.						
<i>Buddleia officinalis</i> Butterfly bush	Spreading	12-15	Lilac	Mid-winter	Full sun	Light, sandy
Comments: Fragrant flowers. Good border plant. Susceptible to frost. Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Calliandra haematocephala</i> Powderpuff	Spreading, open	12-15	Red to white	Summer	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Vigorous. Popular flowering shrub.						
<i>Callistemon citrinus</i> Lemon bottle brush	Upright, spreading	12-15	Red	Late spring	Full sun	Well-drained
Comments: Good specimen or accent plant. Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Callistemon rigidus</i> Bottle brush	Upright	8-10	Red	Late spring	Full sun	Well-drained
Comments: Leaves are quite stiff. Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Camellia japonica</i> Camellia	Upright, dense	10-12	Variable	Winter	Full sun, partial shade	Well-drained, acid
Comments: Many cultivars are available.						
<i>Camellia sasanqua</i> Sasanqua	Upright	10-12	Variable	Winter	Full sun, broken shade	Well-drained, acid
Comments: Many cultivars are available.						

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<i>Coccolus laurifolius</i> Cocculus	Spreading, weeping	12-15	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun, partial shade	Variety
Comments: May be injured by cold. Coarse textured.						
<i>Datura arborea</i> Angel's trumpet	Upright	12-15	White	Summer	Full sun, partial shade	Variety
Comments: Large, fragrant flowers. Poisonous.						
<i>Duranta repens</i> Golden dewdrop	Spreading	12-15	Blue	Warm season	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Yellow fruit is poisonous.						
<i>Acca sellowiana</i> Feijoa	Spreading, compact	8-10	White with red stamens	Spring	Full sun, partial shade	Variety
Comments: Edible fruit. Makes a good clipped hedge. Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Fortunella japonica</i> Kumquat	Spreading	12-15	White	Spring	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Attractive, fragrant, edible fruit. Tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Ilex cornuta</i> Chinese holly	Spreading	12-15	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun, partial shade	Well-drained, acid
Comments: Scarlet or red berries. Good cut foliage. 'Burfordii' is popular cultivar.						
<i>Ilex vomitoria</i> Yaupon holly	Spreading	12-15	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun, shade	Variety
Comments: Excellent large shrub. Tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Illicium parviflorum</i> Anise	Spreading	8-10	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun, shade	Variety
Comments: Easily maintained at smaller sizes. Foliage is fragrant when crushed.						
<i>Ixora coccinea</i> Ixora	Spreading, compact	8-10	Red, yellow, or orange	Warm season	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Many hybrids are available. Sensitive to cold. Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Juniperus chinensis</i> Chinese juniper	Upright, columnar	12-15	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun	Fertile, well-drained
Comments: Cultivars include 'Sylvestris' and 'Torulosa.' Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Lagerstroemia indica</i> Crape myrtle	Upright	12-15	White, pink, red, or purple	Summer	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Deciduous. Susceptible to powdery mildew. Often used as a small tree.						

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<i>Ligustrum japonicum</i> Japanese privet	Upright, spreading	12-15	White	Spring	Full sun, partial shade	Variety
Comments: Fragrant flowers. Excellent screen or barrier.						
<i>Myrica cerifera</i> Southern wax myrtle	Upright, spreading, clumping	12-15	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun, partial shade	Variety
Comments: Excellent, vigorously growing plant. Often used as a small tree. Tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Nerium oleander</i> Oleander	Upright	12-15	Red, pink, cream, or white	Summer	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Showy flowers. Excellent seaside species. Tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Pittosporum tobira</i> Pittosporum	Spreading, compact	8-10	White	Spring	Full sun, shade	Fertile, acid
Comments: Easily maintained at smaller sizes. Variegated selections available. Tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Playcladus orientalis</i> (<i>Thuja orientalis</i>) Oriental arborvitae	Globose, densely foliated	15-20	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Often misused. Not a foundation plant.						
<i>Podocarpus gracillor</i> Weeping podocarpus	Spreading	20-30	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun, shade	Variety
Comments: Susceptible to hard freezes.						
<i>Podocarpus macrophyllus</i> Yew podocarpus	Upright, compact	20-25	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun, shade	Variety
Comments: Easily maintained at smaller sizes. Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Podocarpus nagi</i> Nagi podocarpus	Upright	20-25	Inconspicuous	---	Full sun, shade	Variety
Comments: Strong accent plant. Good cut foliage. Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Prunus caroliniana</i> Cherry laurel	Spreading	20-25	White	Spring	Full sun, shade	Fertile
Comments: Easily trained to small tree or clipped hedge. Messy fruit.						
<i>Pyracantha coccinea</i> Firethorn	Spreading	15-20	White	Spring	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Often trained as espalier. Bright red or orange fruit in fall.						
<i>Ternstroemia gymnanthera</i> Japanese cleyera	Upright	12-15	White		Partial shade, shade	Fertile, well-drained

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Comments: Reddish midribs in leaves.						
<i>Thevetia peruviana</i> Lucky nut	Upright, compact	12-15	Yellow to peach	Warm season	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Susceptible to frost. Angular, poisonous fruit.						
<i>Tibouchina urvilleana</i> (T. <i>Semidecandra</i>) Princess flower	Spreading, open	12-15	Purple	Warm season	Full sun	Well-drained
Comments: Showy flowers. Good border shrub.						
<i>Viburnum odoratissimum</i> Sweet viburnum	Spreading, dense	15-20	White	Spring	Full sun	Variety
Comments: Not a foundation plant. Regular pruning required.						
<i>Vitex trifolia</i> Chaste tree	Spreading	10-12	Lavender to blue	Summer	Full sun	Sandy
Comments: Vigorous shrub. Variegated cultivar most common. Moderately tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Yucca aloifolia</i> Spanish bayonet	Upright, clumping	12-15	White	Summer	Full sun, shade	Well-drained
Comments: Accent plant. Excellent seaside plant. Tolerant of salt spray.						
<i>Yucca elephantipes</i> Spineless yucca	Upright, clumping	15-20	White	Summer	Full sun, shade	Well-drained
Comments: Harmless leaf-tips. Some selections with striped foliage. Tolerant of salt spray.						