

Short Note 1.8

**CITRUS CANKER AND GIANT SWALLOWTAILS by
Roger L. Hammer***

I'm sure that you are abundantly aware that the evil citrus canker people are skulking around Miami-Dade residential areas. Their object of desire is to chainsaw down your homegrown citrus trees so you can, perhaps unwillingly, do your part to protect the state's \$8.5 billion a year citrus industry. As a bonus, you will receive a \$100 voucher that you can redeem at the Walmart of your choice.

There is going to be another unwilling victim in this canker control project and that is the beautiful giant swallowtail butterfly (*Papilio cresphontes*). This butterfly has enjoyed an abundance of larval host plants in the form of citrus leaves. The larvae feed on the leaves of citrus and other members of the Rue Family. With the wholesale loss of citrus in Miami-Dade County it is extremely important that we plant native citrus relatives so this cherished and well-known butterfly will not suffer a severe population collapse.

The citrus relative that is most readily available at nurseries specializing in native plants is wild lime (*Zanthoxylum fagara*), which is a thorny shrub or small tree to 12' or more. The small compound leaves are aromatic when crushed and it produces small, shiny, black seeds. Plant wild lime in an area where you don't mind having a thorny plant. Use it as a barrier hedge or mixed in with other trees and shrubs in a group planting.

A less common tree for our area is hercules-club (*Zanthoxylum clava-herculis*), which is also called "toothache tree" in reference to the leaves and bark that were chewed to alleviate the pain of toothache. Chewing the leaves and bark will numb the lips and gums. This exceptionally thorny tree ranges into northern Miami-Dade County but is almost unheard of in local nurseries. It is probably more readily available in central and northern Florida. A tree in my yard came from a rootsucker that I dug up at the Ojus Landfill off of Ives Dairy Road when an area was being cleared. This is actually a preferred larval host plant of the giant swallowtail so it is well worth making an effort to locate one for your yard.

A rare, endangered member of the same genus in Miami-Dade County is Biscayne prickly-ash (*Zanthoxylum coriaceum*). This small tree is very thorny when young but is without thorns at maturity. Rob Campbell has been collecting seeds from a female tree in my yard to propagate at Plant Creations Nursery. To date, however, none are available for sale to the public so stay tuned on this one.

A final rare, endangered species is yellowwood (*Zanthoxylum flavum*) that occurs in only a few locations in the Lower Florida Keys (and the Marquesas). It is virtually unheard of in nurseries on the mainland but you may wish to check native nurseries in the Florida Keys

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He is a prolific writer. His publications can be found at www.rogerlhammer.com, and are available in many bookstores and on www.amazon.com.

In 2012, Florida International University acknowledged his achievements with a Honorary Doctor of Science Diploma. He received Marjory Stoneman Douglas Award in 1982.