

FGCU Food Forest

Plant Database

Firebush (*Hamelia patens*)

Origin: American Tropics and

Description: Firebush is a perennial shrub that has tubular orange and red flowers. The fruit is a small dark red to purple berry that turns black at

Uses: Food; medicine.

Harvest: Year-round.

Flower: Tubular red to orange to

lengthy. Year-round.

Tolerance: Not cold tolerant; dies back in freezes. Tolerates wide variety of soils; very drought tolerant.



General Description: Firebush is a native perennial and semi-woody shrub to small tree that features bright red to yellow flowers and berries all year long. The bright flowers attract bees, butterflies and hummingbirds, and the berries attract birds who like to eat them.

- **Native Origin:** American subtropics and tropics. Native range from the southern United States to northern Argentina.
- **General History:** Firebush is a native shrub to small tree throughout the American tropics and subtropics, and has been used more for ornamental purposes than for medicinal purposes; however, Firebush has a long history of both edible and medicinal use, especially throughout the central Americas. Firebush leaf extracts can be used for anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and diuretic purposes, and it has also been shown to host antibacterial and antifungal properties, too. A tea can be made from the leaves, stems and flowers, and can be drunk to relieve menstrual cramps, and treat fever and diarrhea. The same tea can be used as a skin treatment for wounds, burns, insect bites, etc.

- **Distribution:** Tropical and subtropical regions in South, Central, and North America, Asia, the Pacific, and the Caribbean.
- **Season of Harvest:** Year-round.
- **Culinary Uses:** The berries can be eaten raw, although they aren't very delicious. They can be made into jellies, jams, and syrups. The leaves, stems, and flowers have many medicinal properties, however.

Firebush	
Scientific Classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Eudicots
(unranked):	Asterids
Order:	Gentianales
Family:	Rubiaceae
Genus:	<i>Hamelia</i>
Species:	<i>H. patens</i>

Sources

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs305>

https://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/morton/black_sapote.html

http://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/giam/plants_and_grasses/native_plants/firebush.html

http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsAZ/Firebush_Hamelia_patens.pdf

<http://www.eattheweeds.com/hamelia-patens-edible-pharmaceutical-2/>

Copyright ©2015 Benjamin Dion