

Nature Notes

...from Sharon

The Snowberry is native to South Florida and thrives throughout the Bahamas and West Indies, where it is referred to as Milkberry. The low scrambling shrub can reach a height of 10 feet, if given a support to climb upon.

The Snowberry is a shrub that needs a partially-shady to sunny location and well-drained soil. It will grow well on sandy loam soils and can tolerate dry conditions. This plant can be found in or near coastal areas throughout Florida and will usually survive



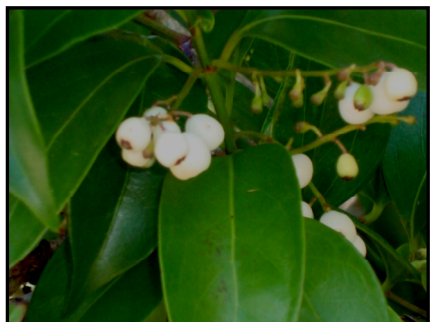
without care. Grown in yards, this plant may be used as a mounding specimen and would also do well on a trellis.

The ovate evergreen leaves of the Snowberry are leathery, shiny, and dark green in color. The undersides of the leaves are a duller, lighter green.

The tiny, delicate yellow, bell-shaped flowers are about one-half an inch long, fragrant, and display in clusters. Although a very showy flower, they are actually partially concealed under the leaves. These are currently blooming in the Preserve. Look on the north side of boardwalk in front of the Learning Center or between parking area 2 and 3 on the west side.



Snowy white berries are about one-quarter of an inch in diameter and are also in clusters. The common name used for this shrub refers to the ovoid, sparkling white berries that follow the delightful flowers. Flowers and fruit may appear several times during the year, due to the semi-tropical weather found in the Preserve. They are an important food source for wild animals, and birds.



In herbal medicine, the roots of Snowberry have been used as a purgative, diuretic, and anti-diarrhetic. Remedy is potent and caution is advised. One of the most interesting remedies was to inhibit alcoholics from drinking. Chopped root was placed in rum, vodka, or gin and soaked in the sun for five days. Patients would take one ounce daily until the mixture was gone. Apparently, they would vomit violently after each drinking session and the smell of alcohol would make them nauseous for years! Again, remedy is potent so take caution.