

Hen's Eye, Coral Ardisia ARCR80

Ardisia crenata Sims

Synonyms: *Ardisia crenulata* Vent., coralberry, spiceberry

From: Miller, James H. and Steve T. Manning. [working title] An Expanded Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests: A Field Guide for Identification and Control. Asheville, NC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Research Station. DRAFT - August 2008

Family: Myrsinaceae

Plant. Evergreen, erect shrub, 2 to 6 feet (0.6 to 1.8 m) in height with short stems or multi-stemmed bushy clumps that jut upward. Shiny green leaves with distinct thickened, wavy margins, drooping white to pink axillary flowers, and dangling, bright red berries in fall and through winter. No rhizomes.

Stem. Twigs light green and shiny, jutting alternately outward from light brown, erect stems becoming increasingly rough with grayish bark. Leaf and stem scars broadly V-shaped with a raised bud at top.

Leaves. Alternate, 4 to 8 inches (10 to 20 cm) long, elliptic to narrowly lanceolate or oblanceolate with a pointed tip, leathery with scalloped crenate margins (thus the scientific name, *crenata*) and raised callused notches. Shiny and dark green above with a paler midvein and whitish green beneath tapering to a short winged petiole.

Flowers. April to October. Axillary clusters dangling below the leaves, with green to red stems, conical buds mixed with four to five white to pink petals, yellow centers and eventually an extending style.

Fruit and seeds. November to March. Abundant, spherical one-seeded drupes, 0.2 to 0.3 inches (6 to 8 mm) wide, hanging down in fanned umbel clusters often jutting outward on lower branch ends, green then ripening through shades of coral to finally bright scarlet.

Ecology. Forms infestations in partial shade and grows best in moist, well-drained soils. Forms dense infestations to shade out ground flora. Spreads by animal-dispersed seed and produces fruit within 2 years.

Resembles only the related shoebutt (*Ardisia elliptica* Thunb.) that is also invasive in only FL at present, in wetlands, which does not have wavy margins and fruit ripening to black.

History and use. Native to Japan and northern India and introduced into FL in 1900 as an ornamental. Still being sold and planted in the Southeast, and worldwide by internet sells.