

Hernando County Noxious Plant Control Ordinance

In June 2015, Hernando County updated its "Noxious Plant Control" ordinance (Section 21-221 through 21-230 of the Hernando County Code of Ordinances). The update designates lead tree (*Leucaena leucocephala*) as a noxious plant species in addition to the Brazilian pepper tree (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) already so designated. The ordinance finds that these species are detrimental to the growth of native vegetation in Hernando County.

The removal of lead tree and Brazilian pepper from all property is required and property owners must prevent these species from re-establishing or growing in the future. The ordinance also requires that all new development remove these plants species from the development site.

Hernando County will conduct educational activities through 2016 with the goal of seeking voluntary compliance with the ordinance. After this period, property owners will be notified if these species are still present. The educational period will include presentations and internet resources to assist homeowners in identifying and removing these species from their properties. The County also plans to remove these two species from public properties and roadways.



Control Methods

Residents who have these trees on their property have several options for removing them and properly disposing of the waste. The county has prepared a list of local landscape professionals who have completed special training provided by UF/IFAS Extension on the most current and effective ways to deal with these trees. The safest way to remove these trees and treat the stumps to avoid regrowth is to contact a licensed, insured and recommended professional. This list may be obtained from the county offices listed on the back of this brochure.

Small trees and seedlings may be removed and placed at the curb for regular yard waste pick-up if they are completely and securely bagged. These trees produce large numbers of viable seeds and it is against Florida Statutes to transport them if they are not properly bagged. Larger trees must have their stumps treated with specific herbicides to ensure complete control. To obtain more information on recommended herbicides to control these trees and using pesticides safely please contact the UF/IFAS Extension Hernando County office.

Remember...
BAG IT 
Don't Drag It!

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[www.hernandocounty.us/code/index.php/
noxious-plants](http://www.hernandocounty.us/code/index.php/noxious-plants)

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USDI National Park Service, Bugwood.org*

The Hernando County
**NOXIOUS
TREE
ORDINANCE**



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Brazilian Pepper Tree

Florida's natural ecosystems are being invaded by several non-native plants.

Brazilian pepper-tree is one of the most aggressive of these non-native invaders. Where once there were ecologically productive mangrove communities along the gulf coast of Hernando County, now there are pure stands of Brazilian pepper-trees.

Brazilian pepper-tree is a shrub or small tree to 10 m (33 ft) tall with a short trunk usually hidden in a dense head of contorted, intertwining branches. The leaves have a reddish, sometimes winged midrib, and smell of turpentine when crushed.

The fruits are in clusters, glossy, green and juicy at first, becoming bright red on ripening, and 6 mm (2.4 in) wide.

Birds and mammals are the chief means of seed dispersal. Seedlings have a high rate of survival; reproduction can occur three years after germination and some trees can live for about 35 years.

The best time to cut Brazilian pepper-trees is when they are not fruiting because seeds contained in the fruits have the capability of producing new trees. Homeowners should always take care to properly bag and dispose of any tree parts when removing.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How can I tell if any of these trees are growing on my property?

A. Both of these trees are found mostly near the coast in Hernando County and are fairly easy to identify from the descriptions given in this brochure. Please contact UF/IFAS Extension Hernando County for more information and pictures or to bring in a plant to be identified.

Q. Why are these two trees so bad to have in my yard?

A. Invasive plants damage natural ecosystems by crowding out native plants, which are essential for providing food and shelter for native wildlife. The Brazilian pepper has already had a major effect on coastal mangroves in South Florida. Both of these trees have been spreading rapidly across the county, partly because there are few if any native predators to keep their population under control. Left uncontrolled invasive trees such as these will continue to spread and damage our fragile coastal ecosystems.

Q. Should I remove them myself or contact a professional?

A. The Hernando County Planning Department has a list of recommended professionals who have the proper training, licenses and knowledge for removing and disposing of these trees. We recommend using one of these services because they will be able to treat the tree stumps and roots with the proper herbicides to prevent regrowth of the trees. These professionals have the proper equipment and chemicals for dealing with these trees.

Q. If I decide to remove them myself, how should I do it?

A. If you would like more information on removing these trees yourself and treating the stumps with an appropriate herbicide, please

contact the UF/IFAS Extension Hernando County office for more information on specific procedures and herbicides to use to ensure complete removal of these trees from your property.

Q. Will the County fine me if I have these trees on my property?

A. The Noxious Plant Control ordinance, as with most ordinances, does provide for the levying of fines in cases of non-compliance. However, this is always as a last resort for Code Enforcement. The County is conducting an educational period where enforcement actions will be delayed to give property owners a chance to learn about the plants and arrange for their removal. The goal is for voluntary compliance and a unified community effort to remove noxious plants from private property. Code Enforcement staff will work with property owners towards this goal before considering the option of levying fines.

Q. Who can I contact for more information on identifying these trees and how I can safely remove them?

A. For more information about the ordinance or about these trees please contact the UF/IFAS Extension Hernando County office, the Hernando County Planning Department or the Hernando County Development Department. Contact information for all of these agencies is located on the back of this brochure.

Q. How should I maintain my property after initial removal?

A. Both of these tree species have the capability of re-sprouting from their trunks or roots, so it is important to follow-up after removal and treatment to ensure the area is still clear. New tree seedlings may appear for quite some time and will need to be destroyed also.

White Lead Tree

The lead tree is native to Mexico and Central America. In the United States, it has been reported as an adventive from Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Texas and the Virgin Islands.

In Hernando County the tree is mostly located along the coast, but has been found growing in alkaline soils further inland. White lead tree grows best in full sunlight and can reach heights of up to 60 feet.

The leaves are alternately arranged, bipinnately compound, and typically 10 inches in length. Flowers are white and grow in globe-shaped clusters at the ends of the branches. Fruits are 4- to 6-inch-long, flat pods that are 1-2 inches wide. Pods contain 10-30 oval-shaped, brown seeds.

In Florida, white lead tree is considered a Category II invasive species, and has the potential to displace native plant communities because it is an aggressive competitor for resources. In its native range, however, white lead tree is planted as a shade tree.

The tree is frost-sensitive, and, except in very protected sites, it is killed to the ground during most winters in northern Florida. However, regrowth is rapid and most trees recover sufficiently to produce large crops of seeds. The seeds germinate readily without pre-treatment, and large numbers of seedlings have been observed around mother plants.

