# MYRTACEAE

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A family of trees and shrubs with 126 genera and ~5,900 species with pantropical distribution extending into warm temperate areas; represented in the New World by 39 genera and ~2,125 species of which 32 genera and ~2,020 species are present in the Neotropics. Although Myrtaceae is not commonly associated with climbing plants, the Old World genus *Metroxideros* and the chiefly neotropical genus *Myrcia* are known to contain a few species of climbers. Those of *Metroxideros* are root-climbers, while in *Myrcia* they are scrambling shrubs. In the Neotropics, the family occupies a wide range of biomes except in arid areas, it is more diverse in the lowlands, but many species are found in higher elevations such as the Andes and the highlands of the Guianas. Since the only climbers in the Neotropics correspond to *Myrcia*, the following section highlights only the characters seen in the two species of climbers that occur in the Neotropics.

**General Characters**

1. STEMS. Cylindrical, woody and slender, reaching a few m in length; cross section no reported but very likely with regular anatomy with cylindrical xylem tissue; rays in Myrtaceae are commonly uniseriate.
2. EXUDATES. No exudates reported.
3. CLIMBING MECHANISM. Scramblers, with short lateral branches.
4. LEAVES. Leaves simple, opposite, with more or less conspicuous, translucent oil glands scattered along the blade, coriaceous with entire margins and pinnate venation; petioles short, glandless; stipules absent.
5. INFLORESCENCES. Dichasial cymes, axillary, simple or paniculate.

6. FLOWERS. Actinomorphic, bisexual; pedicelled or sessile; hypanthium prolonged beyond the ovary; calyx calyptrate, opening by an operculum; petals wanting or inconspicuous; stamens numerous, anthers opening by longitudinal slits; ovary inferior 2-locular, style terminal, filiform, stigma punctiform.

7. FRUITS. A fleshy berry, crowned by the distal part of the hypanthium, with 1 or 2 seeds.

**MYRCIA** de Candolle ex Guillemin in Bory de St.-Vincent, Dict. Class. Hist. Nat. 11: 406. 10 1827 (nom. cons.).

*Calyptranthes* Sw. (1788).

Trees or shrubs, exceptionally scrambling shrubs; stems cylindrical, apparently with regular anatomy, reaching 2–3 m in length; branches ferruginous or reddish pubescent, with bifurcating branching (at least in the species of climbers). Leaves opposite, simple, coriaceous with translucent glandular punctation, pinnately veined, with entire margins, ferruginous or reddish pubescent beneath (at least when young); stipules absent. Inflorescences axillary dichasia cymes, simple or paniculate. Flowers actinomorphic, bisexual; pedicelled or sessile; hypanthium prolonged beyond the ovary; calyx calyptrate, opening by an operculum that pops up as the flower matures, the calyx becoming truncate;


*Myrcia linearis*, from Alain & Clemente 913 (US).

petals wanting or inconspicuous; stamens numerous, filaments free, inserted at the margin of the hypanthium, anthers opening by longitudinal slits; ovary inferior, 2-locular with two ovules per locule, style terminal, filiform, stigma punctiform. Fruit a fleshy berry, crowned by the distal part of the hypanthium, with 1 or 2 seeds.

**Distinctive features**: Scrambling unarmed shrubs, with opposite, coriaceous, glandular punctate leaves; berries crowned by a persistent hypanthium.

**Distribution**: A New World genus (mostly tropical) of trees or shrubs with ~788 species distributed from Mexico to Argentina and Uruguay including the West Indies. Only the two Cuban endemic species, *M. linearis* (Alain) Z. Acosta & K. Samra and *M. paradoxa* (Urb.) Z. Acosta & K. Samra are reported as climbers.