

# *Peltophorum pterocarpum*: Yellow Poinciana<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This upright, handsome, spreading, semievergreen tree has a rounded canopy and is capable of reaching 50 feet in height with a 35 to 50-foot spread. Form can be quite variable from tree to tree, unfortunately, eliminating this plant from the palette of many architects. With proper training and pruning in the nursery and in the landscape, a more uniform crown will develop. The dark green, delicate, feathery leaflets provide a softening effect for the tree's large size and create a welcoming, dappled shade. From May through September, the entire tree's canopy is smothered



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Peltophorum pterocarpum*: Yellow Poinciana  
Credits: Ed Gilman

with a yellow blanket of flowers, appearing in showy, terminal panicles and exuding a delicious, grape-like perfume. These flower clusters are followed by four-inch-long seed pods which ripen to a brilliant, dark, wine-red.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Peltophorum pterocarpum*

**Pronunciation:** pell-TOFF-oh-rum teer-oh-KAR-pum

**Common name(s):** Yellow Poinciana

**Family:** *Leguminosae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10A through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** has been evaluated using the IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas (Fox et al. 2005). This species is not documented in any undisturbed natural areas in Florida. Thus, it is not considered a problem species and may be used in Florida.



Figure 2. Range

1. This document is ENH-593, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date November 1993. Revised March 2007. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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**Uses:** shade; specimen; reclamation; highway median  
**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

## Description

**Height:** 40 to 50 feet  
**Spread:** 30 to 40 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular  
**Crown shape:** vase, round, spreading  
**Crown density:** open  
**Growth rate:** fast  
**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** bipinnately compound, even-pinnately compound  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** oblong  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** semi-evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

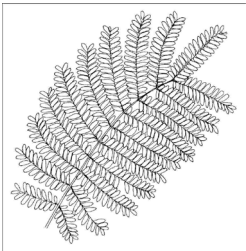


Figure 3. Foliage

## Flower

**Flower color:** yellow  
**Flower characteristics:** very showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** pod or pod-like, elongated  
**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches  
**Fruit covering:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** purple, red  
**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches don't droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure

**Breakage:** susceptible to breakage  
**Current year twig color:** brown  
**Current year twig thickness:** medium, thick  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** low

## Other

**Roots:** can form large surface roots  
**Winter interest:** no  
**Outstanding tree:** no  
**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown  
**Pest resistance:** free of serious pests and diseases

## Use and Management

Yellow Poinciana is a wonderful shade or specimen tree for a large landscape, especially when in full bloom, and it can make a street tree as long as it receives regular pruning to control its weedy, somewhat unkempt habit. Its large size makes it a natural for the wide open spaces of large lawns or city parks.

Trees can be grown with a single or multiple trunk. Trunks or branches of multi-trunked trees should be well-spaced along a central stem and not allowed to grow larger than half the diameter of the main stem. This will increase wind hardiness. Plant only single-trunked trees along streets and other public areas to ensure a durable plant.

A fast-growing tree, Yellow Poinciana grows best in full sun on any well-drained soil. Temperatures in the high 20's cause the leaves to drop but these are quickly replaced. Even though Yellow Poinciana will develop a very large trunk, its shallow, surface roots make it susceptible to being blown over during a hurricane's severe windstorms. Locate the tree about ten feet from sidewalks or pavement so the large surface roots don't cause damage.

*Peltophorum inerme* is grown in the southern part of Florida (USDA hardiness zone 10b) and in the tropical areas, and is not as hardy. *Peltophorum dubium* is cold hardy to Orlando (USDA hardiness zone 9b).

Propagation is by cuttings or seed. Seeds must be scarified and seedlings will bloom in four to five years.

## **Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

## **Literature Cited**

Fox, A.M., D.R. Gordon, J.A. Dusky, L. Tyson, and R.K. Stocker (2005) IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas. Cited from the Internet (November 3, 2006), <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment.html>