

Abelia x grandiflora: Glossy Abelia¹

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Introduction

Glossy abelia is a fine-textured, semi-evergreen, sprawling shrub with 1½ inch-long, red-tinged leaves arranged along thin, arching, multiple stems. It is a hybrid between *A. chinensis* and *A. uniflora*. It stands out from other plants because the leaves retain the reddish foliage all summer long, whereas many plants with reddish leaves lose this coloration later in the summer. Considered to be evergreen in its southern range, glossy abelia will lose 50% of its leaves in colder climates, and the remaining leaves will take on a more pronounced red color. Reaching a height of 6 to 10 feet with a spread of 6 feet, the gently rounded form of glossy abelia is clothed from spring through fall with terminal clusters of delicate pink and white, small, tubular flowers. Multiple stems arise from the ground in a vase shape, spreading apart as they ascend into the foliage.



Figure 2. Full Form, Manicured—*Abelia x grandiflora*: glossy abelia.
Credits: UF/IFAS



Figure 3. Leaf—*Abelia x grandiflora*: glossy abelia.
Credits: UF/IFAS



Figure 1. Full Form, Natural—*Abelia x grandiflora*: glossy abelia.
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1. This document is FPS 001, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Revised October 2004 and November 2017. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Figure 4. Flower—*Abelia x grandiflora*: glossy abelia.
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Abelia x grandiflora*

Pronunciation: uh-BEEL-ee-uh gran-dif-FLOR-uh

Common name(s): glossy abelia, largeflower abelia

Family: *Caprifoliaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 9 (Figure 5)

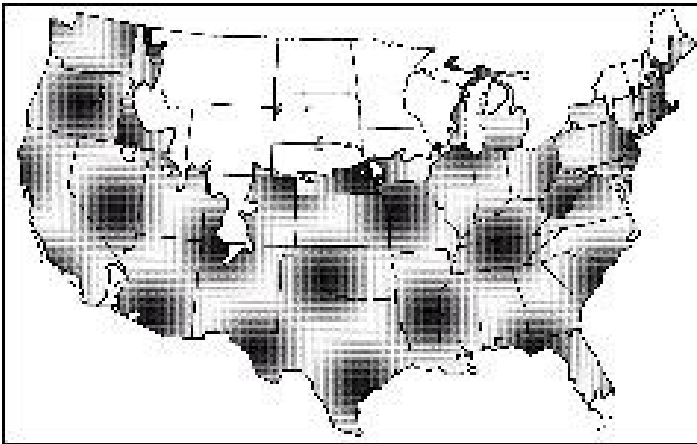


Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not considered a problem species at this time and may be recommended by UF/IFAS faculty (reassess in 10 years)

Uses: border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; superior hedge; specimen; screen; cascading down a wall. Attracts butterflies.

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 6 to 8 feet

Spread: 6 to 8 feet

Plant habit: vase shape; round; upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: whorled

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: purple or red

Fall color: purple

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: lavender

Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer flowering; fall flowering; pleasant fragrance

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: less than ½ inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: tan

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: reddish

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerance: poor
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant.

Use and Management

Glossy abelia grows in an upright, spreading vase shape if left unpruned with numerous thin stems arising from the ground. Stems eventually branch near their tips forming a shrub with a full top and a thin bottom. The cascading nature of glossy abelia makes it ideal for use as a specimen, foundation plant, or shrub border. It also can be planted along a steep bank for erosion control, or it can be clipped into a hedge. Be sure that the top of the hedge is clipped narrower than the bottom to allow adequate light to reach the bottom foliage. This will help keep the plant full all the way to the ground.

Foliage arises maroon fading to dark green, lending a reddish cast to the plant during active growth. The small powderpuff-pink flowers add color continuously during the warm months. Blooming on new growth in the summer, glossy abelia benefits from springtime pruning and will require occasional thinning to keep it in bounds as a hedge. Thinning will help light reach the interior foliage, stimulating branching and creating a fuller plant.

Glossy abelia enjoys fairly rich, moist but well-drained soil in a full sun or lightly shaded location and has good drought tolerance. Plants become thin and unattractive in the shade and do not flower. Plant on 4- to 6-foot centers to form a screen or foundation planting, slightly closer for a hedge. The foliage darkens during the winter, but plants generally remain full all during the cold months.

Cultivars Include

‘Confetti’—cream-variegated foliage, cream colored area turns reddish in cool weather, evergreen to about 10 degrees; ‘Francis Mason’—new green foliage changes to glossy

yellow as it matures, color more noticeable in full sun, light pink flowers, 3 to 4 feet high; ‘Prostrata’—prostrate growth habit, white flowers, sometimes used as a ground cover; and ‘Sherwoodii’—dwarf, to 3 feet, somewhat smaller leaves and flowers. *Abelia* ‘Edward Goucher’, a hybrid between *Abelia x grandiflora* and *Abelia schumannii*, has abundant lavender-pink flowers and showy red calyces, reaches 5 to 8 feet, and is best used in USDA hardiness zone 6 and south. It is superior to most other abelia due to the highly fragrant pink flowers.

Propagation is by cuttings of long, leafless, hardwood stems taken in November to January.

Design Considerations

Glossy abelia works well as a background or massing plant to highlight the forms and colors of companion plants. The fine texture and small leaves of the abelia will show well with contrasting plant features, such as large leaves, coarse texture, thick stems, and dark green color. Contrasting size and shape, such as low-growing groundcover with a sprawling, mounding form, will emphasize the upright, vase shape of abelia. To create plant masses in large areas, select plants with similar characteristics that blend with abelia. Similar textures include thin blades and clumping, arching forms of grasses and other vase-shaped, small leaved shrubs.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern, but abelia plants are occasionally bothered by aphids.