

Abelia x grandiflora 'Sherwoodii': Sherwoodii Glossy Abelia¹

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Introduction

This popular cultivar of glossy abelia is a fine-textured, semi-evergreen, small shrub with 1½ inch-long, red-tinged leaves arranged along thin, stiff stems. Leaves and flowers are smaller than the species. It is much more compact than the species, resembling the Japanese or yaupon hollies. Considered to be evergreen in its southern range, glossy abelia will lose some of its leaves in colder climates, the remaining leaves taking on a more pronounced red color. Reaching a height of 3 to 6 feet with a spread of 6 to 10 feet, the mounded form of 'Sherwoodii' glossy abelia is clothed from spring through fall with terminal clusters of delicate pink and white, small, tubular flowers.



Figure 1. Full Form - *Abelia x grandiflora* 'Sherwoodii': Sherwoodii Glossy Abelia

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Abelia x grandiflora* 'Sherwoodii'

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

Common name(s): dwarf glossy abelia, 'Sherwoodii' glossy abelia

Family: *Caprifoliaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 9 (Fig. 2)

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

not known to be invasive

Uses: hedge; border; mass planting; attracts butterflies

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

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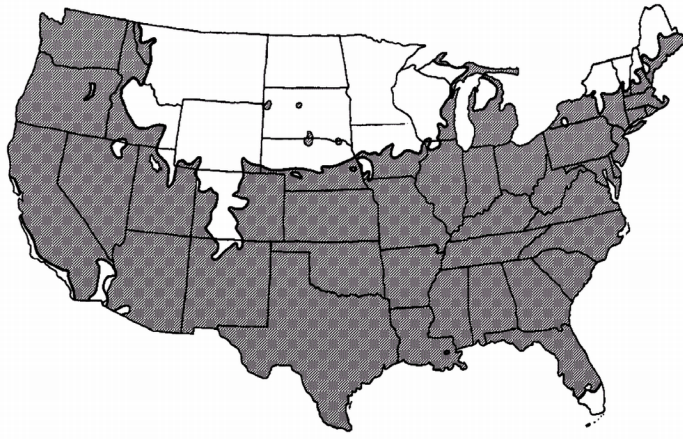


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 3 to 4 feet

Spread: 4 to 6 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: dense

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: pink

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

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: less than 1/2 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

Ideally suited as a low-growing foundation plant, abelia is also excellent as a tall ground cover for a large-scale commercial or industrial landscape. It can be sheared into a formal hedge or into any of a number of topiary shapes. It's nicely suited for training into a low hedge bordering a sidewalk. Growth rate is slow to moderate, making it easy to keep it from growing out of bounds with two clippings per year.

Space plants 4 to 5 feet apart in a mass planting. Be sure to set plants several feet back from a walk, driveway or lawn area, because plants grow wider than tall and often require pruning to control their lateral growth. If you need to prune in this manner, be sure to leave the bottom of the plant much wider than the top so lower foliage is left on the plant. If you attempt to shear vertically, the lower branches are shaded and often lose foliage. This will give the shrub an unsightly, dark, leafless bottom.

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 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: '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; and 'Prostrata' - prostrate growth habit, white flowers, sometimes used as a ground cover. *Abelia* 'Edward Goucher', a hybrid between *Abelia x grandiflora* and *Abelia schumannii*, has abundant lavender-pink flowers and showy red calyces, reaches 5 feet, and is best used in USDA hardiness zone 6.

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. The compact form of 'Sherwoodii' pairs well with taller shrubs with large coarse leaves.

Pests and Diseases

None of major concern but occasionally the plant is bothered by aphids.