

Taxus floridana Florida Yew¹

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Introduction

This lovely Florida native is an evergreen shrub or small tree. It grows slowly to a height of 20 feet. The horizontally held, spreading branches are clothed with short, dark green needles that look pointed but are actually very soft to the touch. New growth is bright green, making a nice contrast to the darker, mature foliage. Insignificant flowers are produced in March on female plants and are followed by single-seeded, small, pulpy fruits, ripening to red in the fall. Both leaves and fruit of Florida yew are poisonous.



Figure 1. Full Form—*Taxus floridana*: Florida yew.
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Leaf—*Taxus floridana*: Florida yew.
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Taxus floridana*

Pronunciation: TACK-suss flor-rid-DAY-nuh

Common name(s): Florida yew

Family: *Taxaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 8 through 9A (Figure 3)

Planting month for zone 8: year-round

Planting month for zone 9: year-round

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Origin: native to Florida

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: near a deck or patio; screen; attracts butterflies; superior hedge

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries



Figure 3. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 10 to 25 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Plant habit: oval; vase shape

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: linear

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: no flowers

Flower characteristic: no flowers

Fruit

Fruit shape: irregular

Fruit length: less than 0.5 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristic: attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: sand; acidic; loam; clay

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

The dense, compact growth of Florida yew makes it ideal for use as a specimen, hedge, or foundation planting, but Florida yew is seldom seen in nurseries and should be used much more often in home landscapes to save it from extinction. In the wild, Florida yew is found only in a small section of north Florida on the eastern shore of the Apalachicola River where it will ultimately be threatened by encroaching developments.

Florida yew should be grown in conditions that can mimic its native habitat as much as possible: broken shade on rich, slightly acid, well-drained soil. Plants should be watered regularly.

Propagation is by cuttings. Mature wood cuttings taken in winter root well under mist.

Pest and Diseases

Scales.

Mushroom root-rot.