

# Taxus floridana Florida Yew<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman, Ryan W. Klein, and Gail Hansen<sup>2</sup>

### 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

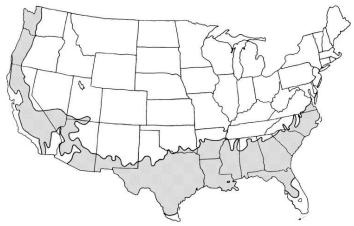


Figure 3. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

# **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

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# **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.

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