

# *Ternstroemia gymnanthera* Cleyera, Japanese Ternstroemia<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The dense, unusually dark green foliage takes on various shades of red depending upon the season and exposure but always remains shining and evergreen. The small, white, fragrant flowers are borne in clusters at the leaf axils and are followed by yellow to dark red fruits, eventually splitting open to reveal shiny, black seeds which persist through the winter.



Figure 1. Full Form—*Ternstroemia gymnanthera*: Cleyera, Japanese ternstroemia.

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Leaf—*Ternstroemia gymnanthera*: Cleyera, Japanese ternstroemia.

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Figure 3. Flower—*Ternstroemia gymnanthera*: Cleyera, Japanese ternstroemia.

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## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Ternstroemia gymnanthera*

**Pronunciation:** tern-STROE-mee-uh jim-NANTH-er-uh

**Common name(s):** cleyera, Japanese ternstroemia, Japanese cleyera

**Family:** *Pentaphylacaceae*

**Plant type:** tree

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7 through 10 (Figure 4)

**Planting month for zone 7:** year-round

**Planting month for zone 8:** year-round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year-round

**Planting month for zone 10:** year-round

**Origin:** native to temperate and tropical Asia

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

**Uses:** screen; border; near a deck or patio; specimen; superior hedge

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



Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## Description

**Height:** 12 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 5 to 10 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering; pleasant fragrance

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval

**Fruit length:** 0.5 to 1 inch

**Fruit cover:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** red

**Fruit characteristic:** persists on the plant

## Trunk and Branches

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

**Current year stem/twig color:** gray/silver

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in the shade

**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; acidic; loam; slightly alkaline

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** 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:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

## Use and Management

Cleyera is tolerant of full sun but grows best in partial shade in rich, moisture-retentive but well-drained, acid soil. The leaves will turn yellow if the soil is alkaline. Pruning is not usually necessary on slow-growing cleyera, but new growth may be pinched to encourage compactness, particularly in the shade. The clean, neat, upright growth of cleyera makes it a good choice as an accent plant as well as a screen or hedge. Plant on 3- to 5-foot centers to form a hedge of mass planting. Cleyera makes a good background plant for a shrub border that acts as a screen or wind break.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

## Pests and Disease

Pest problems are rare on cleyera with scale being the only one of occasional significance.

No diseases are of major concern.