

***Tetrazygia bicolor* Florida Tetrazygia, West Indian Lilac¹**

Edward F. Gilman, Ryan W. Klein, and Gail Hansen²

Introduction

Tetrazygia is a marvelous large shrub or small tree that is native to south Florida. The attractive, evergreen leaves of this 10- to 30-foot-tall plant are lanceolate in shape and have 3 conspicuous veins that run lengthwise. These leaves are dark green with silvery underside and attain a length of 3 to 6 inches. White or pinkish blooms with bright yellow stamens appear in the spring and summer. These showy flowers occur in terminal clusters that are 4 to 5 inches long. Purple or black berries ripen in the late summer and fall and are persistent on the plant. The fruits are edible, some say delicious, and the birds are very fond of them.



Figure 1. Full Form—*Tetrazygia bicolor*: Florida Tetrazygia, West Indian lilac.

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Figure 2. Fleaf—*Tetrazygia bicolor*: Florida Tetrazygia, West Indian lilac.

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Figure 3. Flower—*Tetrazygia bicolor*: Florida Tetrazygia, West Indian lilac.

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1. This document is FPS-577, one of a series of the Department of Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Revised October 2023. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor emeritus; Ryan W. Klein, assistant professor, arboriculture; and Gail Hansen, professor, sustainable landscape design; Department of Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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General Information

Scientific name: *Tetrazygia bicolor*

Pronunciation: tet-truh-ZIG-ee-uh BI-cull-ler

Common name(s): Florida tetrazygia, West Indian lilac, Florida clover ash, tetrazygia

Family: *Melastomataceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Figure 4)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: specimen; reclamation plant; trained as a standard; screen; foundation; border

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



Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 10 to 30 feet

Spread: 4 to 10 feet

Plant habit: oval

Plant density: open

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: lanceolate

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white; pink

Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: less than 0.5 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristic: suited for human consumption; persists on the plant; attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; not particularly showy

Current year stem/twig color: green; reddish

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

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: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Tetrazygia can be used in the landscape as a specimen or tall hedge or screen. It is best to use a hand pruner instead of a hedge pruner to clip the plant because leaves are large. Large leaves look best if they are not cut during the clipping process, and it is hard to avoid cutting leaves in half with a hedge pruner. Some consider this plant to be one of the best landscape plants for central and south Florida. Unfortunately, it is seldom grown or used. The foliage presents a beautiful, drooping display of coarse texture that will fit into any landscape site, provided there is ample room for its large size.

Tetrazygia bicolor will survive in full sun but prefers partial shade. It will tolerate drought and grows well on most well-drained soils.

Tetrazygia can be propagated from seed.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.