

# *Podocarpus macrophyllus*: Podocarpus<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman, Dennis G. Watson, Ryan W. Klein, Andrew K. Koeser, Deborah R. Hilbert, and Drew C. McLean<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

With densely foliated lower limbs which reach the ground and neat, dark green, evergreen leaves, yew podocarpus is very popular as a dense screen or hedge. However, yew podocarpus can reach 30 to 40 feet in height when not sheared and is quite attractive as a tree with the lower branches removed, revealing the light brown, peeling bark. If space permits, leave the lower limbs on the tree for an almost spruce-like appearance. The tree grows in an open manner with large spaces between the branches creating a pleasing, irregular oval silhouette in middle and old age. The inconspicuous flowers are followed by fleshy, purple, small, edible fruits (though the similarly looking seeds are

toxic, therefore it is best to avoid ingesting any part of this tree that resembles fruit) on female trees which are quite attractive to birds but not really messy on sidewalks or pavement.



Figure 2. Hedge Form - *Podocarpus macrophyllus*: Yew podocarpus  
Credits: UF/IFAS



Figure 1. Full Form - *Podocarpus macrophyllus*: Yew podocarpus  
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## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Podocarpus macrophyllus*

**Pronunciation:** poe-doe-KAR-pus mack-roe-FILL-us

**Common name(s):** Yew podocarpus, yew-pine, Japanese yew

**Family:** *Podocarpaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8B through 11 (Figure 3)

**Origin:** native to southern China and Japan

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor emeritus, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering Department; Ryan W. Klein, graduate assistant, Environmental Horticulture Department; Andrew K. Koeser, assistant professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Gulf Coast Research and Education Center; Deborah R. Hilbert, graduate assistant, Environmental Horticulture Department, GCREC; and Drew C. McLean, biological scientist, Environmental Horticulture Department, GCREC; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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**UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status:** not considered a problem species at this time, may be recommended (North, Central, South)

**Uses:** highway median; screen; street without sidewalk; specimen; shade; hedge; reclamation; espalier; deck or patio; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; urban tolerant; trained as a standard; indoors



Figure 3. Range

## Description

**Height:** 30 to 40 feet

**Spread:** 20 to 25 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular

**Crown shape:** round

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** whorled

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** linear

**Leaf venation:** parallel

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 1 to 5 inches

**Leaf color:** dark green on top, grayish underneath

**Fall color:** no color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristics:** not showy



Figure 4. Leaf - *Podocarpus macrophyllus*: Yew podocarpus  
Credits: UF/IFAS



Figure 5. Flower - *Podocarpus macrophyllus*: Yew podocarpus  
Credits: UF/IFAS



## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** irregular, round, oval

**Fruit length:** ½ inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy, drupe-like aril

**Fruit color:** reddish purple or blue

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem



Figure 6. Fruit - *Podocarpus macrophyllus*: Yew podocarpus  
Credits: UF/IFAS

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/branches:** branches don't droop; not showy; typically one trunk; no thorns

**Bark:** reddish brown, shredding, and turns gray with age

**Pruning requirement:** little required

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium, thick

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

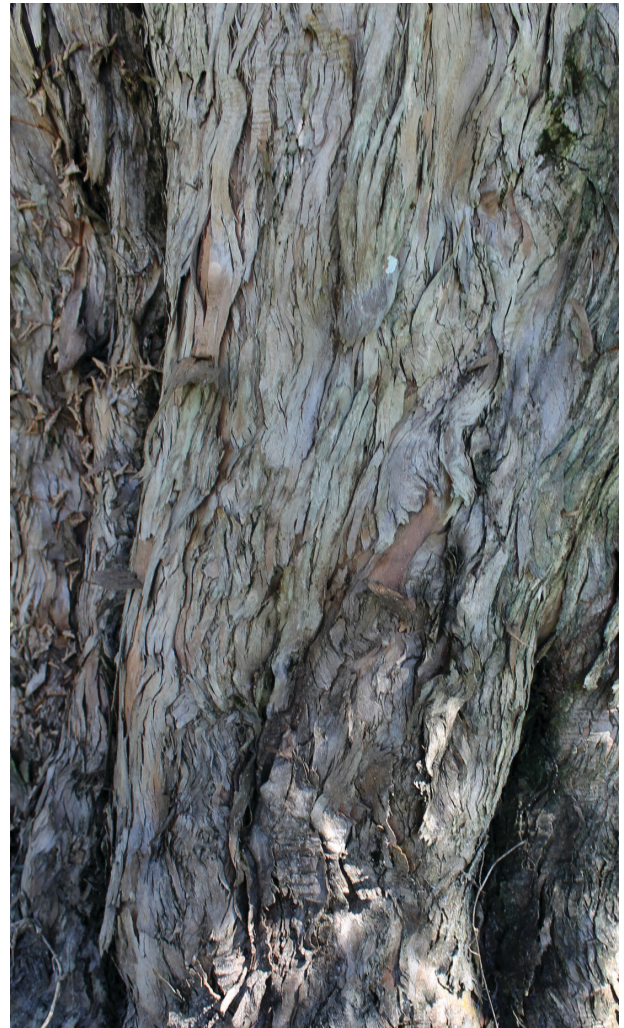


Figure 7. Bark - *Podocarpus macrophyllus*: Yew podocarpus  
Credits: Gitta Hasing, UF/IFAS

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun to partial shade

**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** high

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** no

**Outstanding tree:** yes

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown

**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

## Use and Management

This is one of a few trees which can be pruned into a nice hedge. The dark green foliage and dense growth creates a formal mass. It looks better when pruned with a hand pruner, not sheared with a hedge trimmer.

Showing best growth and form in full sun, yew podocarpus will grow more slowly and have a looser appearance when grown in shade. It will grow on the north side of a tall building with little or no direct sun. It will tolerate a wide variety of well-drained, acidic soils. Don't plant on wet soils. This is a tough tree, adaptable to urban conditions and should be used much more extensively as a street tree. It should be used more in areas of poor soils and restricted rooting space. Unfortunately, most people choose to trim the tree into a column or hedge, so not many have seen the true beauty of the tree. It will make an attractive specimen, street or parking lot tree, even for the smallest soil space in a downtown planting pit. Roots are not a problem in restricted-soil planting areas and usually do not lift sidewalks.

Many varieties are available for selection of habit, leaf form, color, etc. *Podocarpus macrophyllus* var. *angustifolius* is a narrow, columnar tree with curved leaves, 2 to 4.5 inches long; *Podocarpus macrophyllus* var. *appressus* is a low shrub with short leaves; *Podocarpus macrophyllus* var. *maki* has erect branches, columnar form, 1.5 to 3-inch-long leaves.

Propagation is by seeds or cuttings. Hardwood cuttings root easily. Cutting propagation would ensure more uniform trees than seedlings. Nursery operators should be encouraged to grow Yew Podocarpus in the single-trunked tree form for planting in urban landscapes.

## Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Occasionally bothered by scale, mites, and sooty mold but not seriously. Some magnesium-deficiency on sandy soil, which is easily corrected with magnesium sulfate.

## Additional References

Koeser, A. K., Hasing, G., Friedman, M. H., and Irving, R. B. 2015. Trees: North & Central Florida. University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

Koeser, A.K., Friedman, M.H., Hasing, G., Finley, H., Schelb, J. 2017. Trees: South Florida and the Keys. University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.