

***Tecoma stans*: Yellow Elder¹**

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Introduction

This spreading, fast-growing evergreen shrub or small tree can grow to a height of 10 to 30 feet and is noted for its brilliant, bell-shaped, fragrant yellow flowers. Reaching full bloom in fall, yellow elder produces some flowers with each flush of new growth and therefore has some color most of the year.

General Information

Scientific name: *Tecoma stans*

Pronunciation: teh-KOE-muh stanz

Common name(s): yellow elder, yellow trumpet flower, yellow trumpetbush

Family: *Bignoniaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Figure 2)

Origin: native to the tropical America's and the West Indies

UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status: invasive and not recommended except for "specified and limited" use

approved by the UF/IFAS Invasive Plant Working Group

Uses: street without sidewalk; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; deck or patio; container or planter; specimen; espalier; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median



Figure 1. Full Form—*Tecoma stans*: yellow elder

Description

Height: 10 to 30 feet

Spread: 8 to 30 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: oval

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Range

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: odd-pinnately compound; made up of 5 to 13 leaflets

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: lanceolate to elliptic

Leaf venation: pinnate, brachidodrome

Leaf type and persistence: semi-evergreen, evergreen

Leaf blade length: 4 to 10 inches; leaflets are 1½ to 5 inches

Leaf color: yellowish green to dark green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

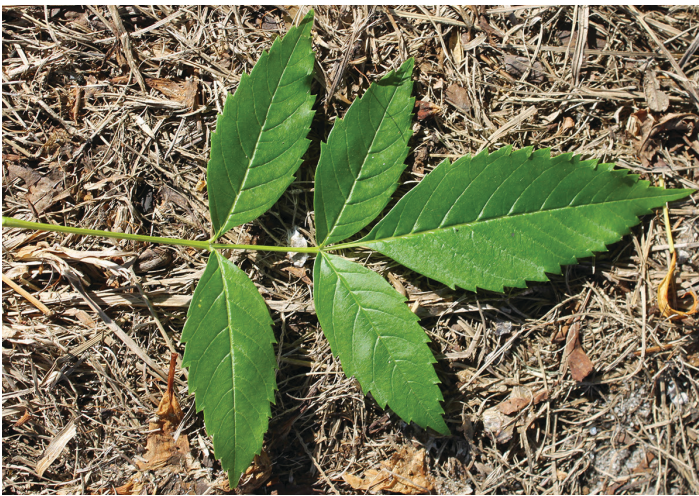


Figure 3. Leaf—*Tecoma stans*: yellow elder

Flower

Flower color: bright yellow with thin, red vertical lines along the inner throat

Flower characteristics: very showy; trumpet-shaped; somewhat fragrant; emerges in clusters on racemes

Flowering: primarily spring and fall, but also year-round



Figure 4. Flower—*Tecoma stans*: yellow elder

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; long slender capsule

Fruit length: 4 to 10 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: turns from bright green to brown when mature

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Fruiting: primarily spring and fall, but also year-round



Figure 5. Fruit—*Tecoma stans*: yellow elder

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; no thorns

Bark: light gray to brown, with white lenticels when young, then becomes fissured with age

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: unknown



Figure 6. Bark—*Tecoma stans*: yellow elder

Credits: Gitta Hasing

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

While sometimes trained to a single trunk, yellow elder is most often used as a specimen or mixed into a shrub border. The somewhat weedy growth requires pruning to control shape, but it is worth the effort due to the brilliant flowers. Its small stature allows it to be used beneath power lines as a street tree.

Growing in full sun on any well-drained soil, yellow elder survives on rain alone making it well-suited to naturalized and low-maintenance gardens. It would also make a nice patio tree and is suited for planting in parking lot islands and medians. The dropping fruit can cause a slight litter problem.

Plants grow easily from seed and can also be propagated from cuttings. Seedlings are easily transplanted and will bloom within two years.

Pests

Yellow elder is relatively pest-free with chewing insects and scale being only minor problems.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

Reference

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