

Tabebuia serratifolia, Yellow Trumpet Tree¹

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Family

Bignoniaceae, bignonia family

Genus

The genus name *Tabebuia*, originating from the Tupian (Brazil) words that translate to “ant” and “wood,” refers to the mutually beneficial relationship thought to occur between ant colonies and this genus.

Species

The species name *serratifolia* comes from a combination of the Latin words *serra*, meaning “saw-like” or “serrated,” and *folia*, meaning “leaf,” in reference to the serrated or toothed edges on the leaves of this species.

Common Name

Yellow trumpet tree, Yellow poui

The word “yellow” refers to the brightly colored flowers this tree produces. The term “trumpet tree” is in reference to the shape of the flowers, each of which resembles a single trumpet.

Description

This deciduous tree is native to South and Central America, and has been introduced to the Caribbean islands, United States, Kenya, and India. It grows best in warm and moist climates when in full sun.



Figure 1. *Tabebuia serratifolia*, Yellow Trumpet Tree
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While it can reach heights of up to 100 feet in its native range, yellow trumpet tree reaches heights between 25 and 40 feet in Florida. Its bright-green leaves are palmately compound and are composed of 3–5 leaflets, with the center leaflet being the largest at 6–10 inches in length. The smooth bark is grayish tan, and the characteristic yellow, trumpet-shaped flowers are arranged in clusters on exposed branches. In Florida, the flowers bloom from late winter to early spring and seeds are 10-inch-long bean-like capsules.

Allergen

Pollen from this tree is moderately allergenic.

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Applications

Commercial/Practical

In its native range, the strong and durable hardwood from this species is used in the construction of homes, bridges, and railway sleepers. While the wood is considered to be highly resistant to decay, it is susceptible to damage from crustaceans and mollusks in marine environments.

Horticultural

Yellow trumpet tree is commonly planted in Florida as an ornamental landscape and shade tree. Many people find the bright, yellow blossoms to be highly attractive, especially since they are produced in the absence of leaves. Once established, this tree is drought tolerant, making it easier to care for and less demanding on water resources. Yellow trumpet tree also has a relatively high tolerance to salt spray, and therefore is an appropriate street tree or yard specimen in coastal areas.

Medicinal

The bark of this genus contains the compound lapachol, which has been suggested to have anti-cancer properties; however, this compound has also been found to be toxic. Additionally, the inner bark of this genus is thought to have antifungal properties.

Additional References

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