

## ***Illicium anisatum* Japanese Anise-Tree<sup>1</sup>**

Edward F. Gilman<sup>2</sup>

### **Introduction**

*Illicium anisatum* is an upright, rounded, bushy shrub or small tree that attains a height of 10 to 15 feet (Fig. 1). The foliage of this plant is exceptional. In contrast to *Illicium parviflorum* and *Illicium floridanum*, the evergreen leaves of *Illicium anisatum* are a lustrous medium to dark green color with undulate margins. All anise leaves smell a little like root beer when they are crushed. Leaves of anise tree are generally 2 to 4 inches long, a little smaller than those on the other two species. Many yellowish-white or greenish-white flowers, with up to 30 petals, are produced in spring. These axillary flowers are star-shaped and have no fragrance, but can be showy if you are close to the plant. They are produced in abundance in some years. The fruits of the anise tree are star-shaped follicles that eventually release dark brown seeds.

### **General Information**

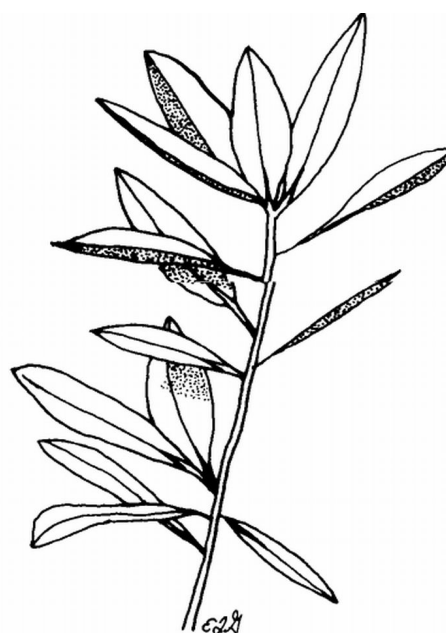
**Scientific name:** *Illicium anisatum*

**Pronunciation:** ill-LISS-ee-um an-niss-SAY-tum

**Common name(s):** Japanese anise tree

**Family:** *Illiciaceae*

**Plant type:** tree



**Figure 1.** Japanese Anisetree.

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8 through 10 (Fig. 2)

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

1. This document is FPS-276, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date October, 1999. Reviewed May, 2007. Visit the EDIS Web Site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611



**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

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

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** hedge; espalier; screen; foundation; border

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

### Description

**Height:** 10 to 15 feet

**Spread:** 8 to 15 feet

**Plant habit:** oval

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** undulate

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see

**Leaf type and persistence:** fragrant

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

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** yellow

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

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** irregular

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit cover:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** green

**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

## 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

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

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun

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

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** poor

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

## Other

**Roots:** usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

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

## Use and Management

This plant is most useful as the base green mass in a shrub border. Its large size makes it well suited for creating a screen to maintain a visual and noise barrier. The anise tree is ideal for shady natural areas

and may also be used for foundation plantings if you do not mind the regular clipping that will be needed to maintain it as a hedge. Some people have trained them into small trees for planting near a patio or deck.

*Illicium anisatum* is adaptable, growing in a full sun to mostly shaded location in the landscape and performs best on a moist, well-drained, rich soil. It is moderately tolerant of drought but has a low salt spray tolerance. Annual pruning may be necessary if one is attempting to maintain this plant as a shrub. Little fertilizer appears to be necessary to maintain good foliage color and growth in the landscape.

There is a white flowered form of the plant available at some garden centers. Propagate the anise tree by seed, semi-ripe cuttings, or by simple layering.

## Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Mites and scales may be troublesome on occasion.