

Pittosporum tobira 'Wheeleri' Wheeler's Dwarf *Pittosporum*¹

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Introduction

Wheeler's dwarf pittosporum is a 3- to 4-foot-tall, evergreen shrub that is rounded in form (Fig. 1). This shrub will form a low, compact mound of dark green foliage, but with age it can also be pruned to form a picturesque, miniature tree in a container. The thick, leathery leaves of this plant are about 4 inches long. These glossy, dark green leaves have revolute margins and very short, nearly inconspicuous petioles. The flowers of Wheeler's dwarf pittosporum are not noticeable, and this plant produces no fruit.

General Information

Scientific name: *Pittosporum tobira* 'Wheeleri'

Pronunciation: pit-tuss-SPOR-rum toe-BYE-ruh

Common name(s): Wheeler's dwarf pittosporum

Family: *Pittosporaceae*

Plant type: ground cover



Figure 1. Wheeler's dwarf pittosporum

USDA hardiness zones: 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: mass planting; container or above-ground planter; trained as a standard; ground cover; suitable for growing indoors

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 2 to 3 feet

Spread: 3 to 5 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: spring flowering; pleasant fragrance

Fruit

Fruit shape: irregular

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: gray/silver

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: alkaline; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: moderate

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: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

This plant is wonderful for the front of shrub borders, and it is ideal for patios and terraces. It should not be planted next to or along a foundation because it does not tolerate poor drainage. Wheeler's dwarf pittosporum lends itself well to raised planters and containers and will provide a lovely background for annual beds. It makes a suitable tall ground cover planted on 4-foot centers. I have observed healthy plants most frequently along the coast where the wind helps keep the foliage and soils dry. Inland plantings of this cultivar do not appear to last very long.

This cultivar is not as cold hardy as the species and will be severely damaged at 10°F. *Pittosporum tobira* 'Wheeleri' should be planted in an area in which the topsoil has been prepared. The soil should be kept adequately moist, and the plant should be fertilized 2 to 3 times each year. Wheeler's dwarf pittosporum needs to be placed in an area of the landscape that receives full to partial sun. Pruning or shearing is not needed to maintain a neat, uniform

shape. This cultivar is less tolerant to adverse growing conditions than the species. It can even be considered picky. Only plant if the soil drainage is excellent and a regular maintenance program can be provided including irrigation and fertilization.

Wheeler's dwarf pittosporum is commonly propagated by semi-hardwood or hardwood cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

This cultivar is more susceptible to leaf spot disease than the species and may be occasionally bothered by mealy bugs.