

***Turnera ulmifolia* Yellow Alder, Yellow Elder¹**

Edward F. Gilman²

Introduction

Yellow alder is a small shrub native to the Caribbean basin (Fig. 1). Many stems originate close to the ground but they branch infrequently forming an open, leggy plant. Those in the full sun branch more and stay fuller than those in partial shade. Clear yellow flowers are produced daily, each lasting several hours before closing at night. New flowers open the next morning. Leaves stay dark green with little or no fertilizer.

General Information

Scientific name: *Turnera ulmifolia*

Pronunciation: TERN-er-uh ul-miff-FOLE-lee-uh

Common name(s): yellow alder, yellow elder

Family: *Turneraceae*

Plant type: ground cover

USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 9: year round

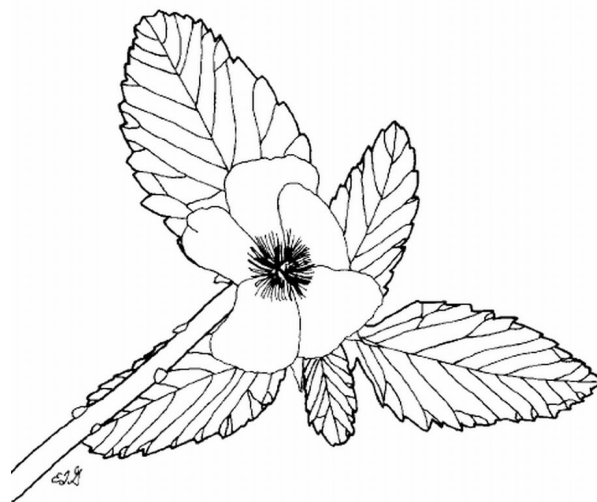


Figure 1. Yellow alder

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: foundation; border; mass planting; ground cover; attracts butterflies

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

1. This document is FPS-593, 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.

Description

Height: 2 to 3 feet

Spread: 2 to 3 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: ovate

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: yellow

Flower characteristic: year-round flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit cover: unknown

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multitrunked or clumping stems

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; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: unknown

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: may self-seed each year

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

Use and Management

Space plants several feet apart to form a ground cover in one season. To thicken the plant, cut stems back when they become leggy to force new branches close to the ground. To use as a low maintenance plant, consider locating alder alone as an accent in a shrub border or in a ground cover to display its natural open habit. It will display its bright yellow flowers on the outside edge of the plant without pruning. Alder seedlings often germinate near the plants and can become weeds in the landscape.

Plant yellow alder in the full sun or partial shade for best form and flowering. Plants appear to adapt to a variety of soil conditions including alkaline pH and dry sites. Freezing temperatures kill plants to the ground, but warm spring weather brings them back to life in central and south Florida.

Pests and Diseases

White flies are often found on the foliage. Severe infestations can injure the plants. Aphids and scales can also infest the foliage, but they are usually not too serious.