

Yellow anise

(*Illicium parviflorum*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Yellow anisetree is an evergreen shrub to small tree found in mesic hammocks, bluffs, ravines and seepage swamps. It is endemic to only seven Central Florida counties. Its dense evergreen foliage provides cover for birds and other wildlife. Its lightly fragrant blooms appear in spring and summer. They are pollinated by small insects, particularly flies in the Diptera order.

Flowers are tiny (about ½-inch in diameter) with 12 to 15 greenish-yellow tepals. They are born on fleshy stalks. Leaves are up to 6 inches long, leathery and elliptic with blunt tips. Margins are generally entire but may be undulate.

Leaf upper surface is dark green and smooth; the underside is flecked with pale glands. Leaf arrangement is alternate. Fruits are small, green star-shaped capsules, that turn brown and dehisce when mature, dispersing its many seeds.

The entire plant — especially the leaves when crushed — emits an anise- or licorice-scented fragrance. It is related to the common spice Star-anise (*Illicium verum*), but like many other anise species, including Florida anise (*I. floridanum*) of North Florida, the leaves and fruit may be toxic. The bark is a source of anise oil, and the roots may be used like sassafras.

The genus *Illicium* is from the Latin *illicio*, or “entice.” The species epithet *parviflorum* is from the Latin *parvus*, meaning “small,” and *flōs* (*flōris*), or “flower.”

Family: Schisandraceae

Native range: Marion, Volusia, Seminole, Lake, Orange, Polk and Osceola counties

To see where natural populations of Yellow anisetree have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 8A–10A

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Rich, acidic, moist to moderately dry soils

Exposure: Partial to full shade

Growth habit: 10–20’ tall with 5–10’+ spread

Propagation: Cuttings, seed

Garden tips: Yellow anise can be pruned to any desired shape, making it great for a buffer, screen or hedge, or used as a specimen plant. Its foliage may thin out when grown in full shade. The plant is relatively pest-free but cannot tolerate salt or long periods of drought.

Yellow anise is occasionally available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.



Photo by Mary Keim