



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Iva frutescens*<sup>1</sup>

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

### Introduction

The Marsh Elder is a tardily deciduous maritime shrub that is native to coastal saline wetlands in the southeastern part of the country. Its native habitat includes the saline grasses and rushes. The leaves of this shrub are dull green and lanceolate and have serrate margins. The roughly pubescent leaves have three prominent veins originating together at the base of the leaf. They bow away from each other and partially come back together near the tip of the leaf. This 4- to 6-foot-tall shrub has greenish flower heads that are borne terminally in panicles. Flowers are abundant and appear from July to September. The small fruits are dark purplish brown achenes that are covered with pale dots of resin.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Iva frutescens*

**Pronunciation:** EYE-vuh froo-TESS-enz

**Common name(s):** Marsh-Elder

**Family:** *Compositae*

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8 through 10 (Fig. 1)

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

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

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

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** border

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

### Description

**Height:** 4 to 6 feet

**Spread:** 4 to 6 feet

**Plant habit:** upright; oval

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

#### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** serrate

**Leaf shape:** lanceolate

**Leaf venation:** parallel

**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:** green

**Flower characteristic:** summer flowering; inconspicuous and not showy

#### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval

**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch

**Fruit cover:** dry or hard

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-290, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October, 1999 Please 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.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences / University of Florida / Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean



Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Fruit color:** purple

**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

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

**Current year stem/twig color:** unknown

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

**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

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** well-drained; extended flooding; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** good

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

**Use and Management**

Marsh Elder adapts well to clipping so it can be used in the landscape as a low hedge or border plant. Its tolerance to wet soil and compact habit makes it well suited for planting near a foundation of a building.

*Iva frutescens* is native to Florida's coastal marshes and shores and requires a full sun position in the landscape. It grows in well-drained basic (high pH) soils but is moderately tolerant of drought and wetness. Its ability to grow in brackish water makes it a good candidate for embankment restoration and stabilization.

