**Tecoma stans**  
Yellow-Elder¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

**INTRODUCTION**

This spreading, fast-growing evergreen shrub or small tree is noted for its brilliant, bell-shaped, fragrant yellow flowers (Fig. 1). Reaching full bloom in fall, Yellow-Elder produces some flowers with each flush of new growth and therefore has some color most of the year.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Scientific name: *Tecoma stans*  
Pronunciation: teh-KOE-muh stanz  
Common name(s): Yellow-Elder, Yellow Trumpet-Flower  
Family: Bignoniaceae  
USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)  
Origin: not native to North America  
Uses: container or above-ground planter; espalier; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance  
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

**DESCRIPTION**

Height: 20 to 30 feet  
Spread: 20 to 30 feet  
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette  
Crown shape: oval

**Figure 1. Mature Yellow-Elder.**

Crown density: moderate  
Growth rate: medium  
Texture: medium

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite  
Leaf type: odd pinnately compound  
Leaflet margin: serrate  
Leaflet shape: lanceolate; ovate  
Leaflet venation: banchidodrome; pinnate  
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen; semievergreen  
Leaflet blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: no fall color change

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**Tecoma stans -- Yellow-Elder**

### Fall characteristic:
- **not showy**

### Flower
- **Flower color:** yellow
- **Flower characteristics:** very showy; year round flowering (Fig. 3)

### Fruit
- **Fruit shape:** elongated
- **Fruit length:** 6 to 12 inches; 3 to 6 inches
- **Fruit covering:** dry or hard
- **Fruit color:** brown
- **Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; showy

### Trunk and Branches
- **Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

### Pruning requirement:
- requires pruning to develop strong structure
- **Breakage:** resistant
- **Current year twig color:** green
- **Current year twig thickness:** thin

### Culture
- **Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun
- **Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained
- **Drought tolerance:** high
- **Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

### Other
- **Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem
- **Winter interest:** tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
- **Outstanding tree:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
- **Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time
- **Pest resistance:** no pests are normally seen on the tree

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**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.
USE AND MANAGEMENT

While sometimes trained to a single trunk, Yellow-Elder is most often used as a specimen or mixed into a shrub border. The somewhat weedy growth requires pruning to control shape, but it is worth the effort due to the brilliant flowers. Its small stature allows it to be used beneath power lines as a street tree.

Growing in full sun on any well-drained soil, Yellow-Elder survives on rain alone making it well-suited to naturalized and low-maintenance gardens. It would also make a nice patio tree and is suited for planting in parking lot islands and medians. The dropping fruit can cause a slight litter problem.

Plants grow easily from seed and can also be propagated from cuttings. Seedlings are easily transplanted and will bloom within two years.

Pests

Yellow-Elder is relatively pest-free with chewing insects and scale being only minor problems.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.