



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Tetrazygia bicolor¹

Edward F. Gilman²

Introduction

Tetrazygia is a marvelous large shrub or small tree that is native to south Florida (Fig. 1). The attractive, evergreen leaves of this 10- to 30-foot-tall plant are lanceolate in shape and have 3 conspicuous veins that run lengthwise. These leaves are dark green with silvery underside and attain a length of 3 to 6 inches. White or pinkish blooms, with bright yellow stamens, appear in the spring and summer. These showy flowers occur in terminal clusters that are 4 to 5 inches long. Purple or black berries ripen in the late summer and fall and are persistent on the plant. The fruits are edible, some say delicious, and the birds are very fond of them.

General Information

Scientific name: *Tetrazygia bicolor*

Pronunciation: tet-truh-ZIG-ee-uh BI-cull-ler

Common name(s): Florida Tetrazygia, West Indian Lilac

Family: *Melastomataceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: specimen; reclamation plant; trained as a standard; screen; foundation; border

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

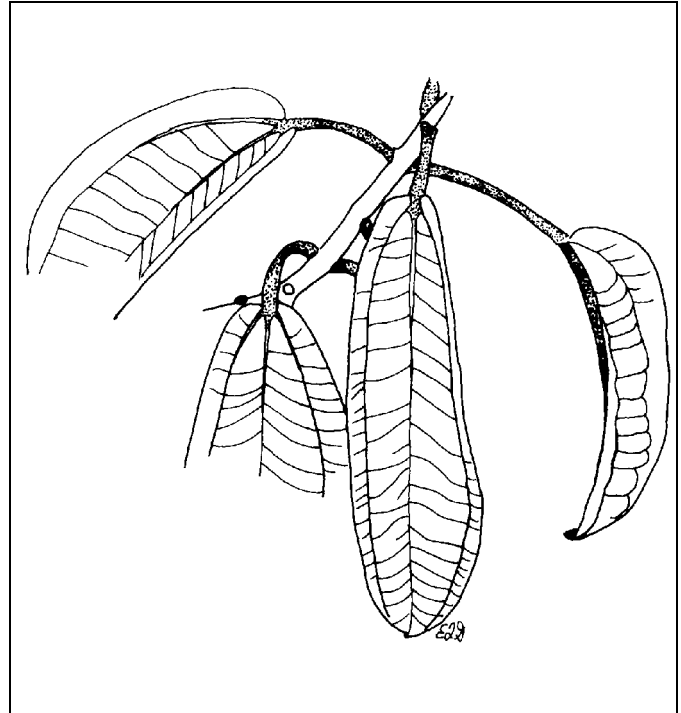


Figure 1. Florida Tetrazygia.

Description

Height: 10 to 30 feet

Spread: 4 to 10 feet

Plant habit: oval

Plant density: open

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** entire
- Leaf shape:** lanceolate
- Leaf venation:** parallel
- Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

Flower

- Flower color:** white; pink
- Flower characteristic:** spring flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** oval
- Fruit length:** less than .5 inch
- Fruit cover:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** brown

Fruit characteristic: suited for human consumption; persists on the plant; attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; not particularly showy
- Current year stem/twig color:** green; reddish
- 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:** high
- Soil salt tolerances:** poor
- Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Tetrazygia can be used in the landscape as a specimen or tall hedge or screen. It is best to clip the plant with a hand pruner instead of with a hedge pruner because leaves are large. Large leaves look best if they are not cut during the clipping process. It is hard to avoid cutting leaves in half with a hedge pruner. Some consider this plant to be one of the best landscape plants for central and south Florida. Unfortunately, it is seldom grown or used. The foliage presents a beautiful, drooping display of coarse texture that will fit into any landscape site, provided there is ample room for its large size.

Tetrazygia bicolor will survive in full sun but prefers partial shade. It will tolerate drought and grows well on most well-drained soils.

Tetrazygia can be propagated from seed.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.