

Torreya taxifolia Florida Torreya¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

This upright, pyramidal, evergreen tree has fine-textured, drooping branches armed with sharp-pointed, needle-like, glossy, dark green leaves (Fig. 1). The leaves give off a strong odor of turpentine (or tomato plant) when crushed. Florida Torreya can reach a height of 40 feet with a 20-foot spread and has a slow growth rate. It is native to the wooded slopes and ravines along the eastern bank of the Appalachicola River in western Florida and is extremely rare in the wild. More widespread use of this native tree will help save it from extinction.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Torreya taxifolia*
Pronunciation: TOR-ee-uh tack-sih-FOLE-ee-uh
Common name(s): Florida Torreya, Stinking Yew
Family: *Taxaceae*
USDA hardiness zones: 8 through 9 (Fig. 2)
Origin: native to North America
Uses: specimen; no proven urban tolerance
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

DESCRIPTION

Height: 10 to 20 feet
Spread: 15 to 25 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: pyramidal
Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

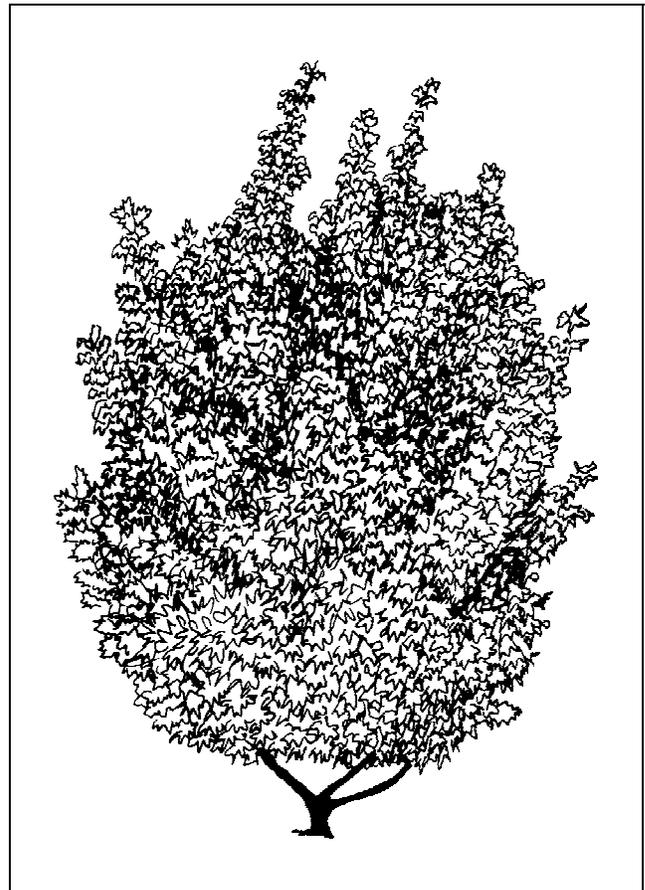


Figure 1. Young Florida Torreya.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-644, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf shape: linear

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen; fragrant; needle leaf evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: no flowers

Flower characteristics: no flowers

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches; .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: purple

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: 0.51

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

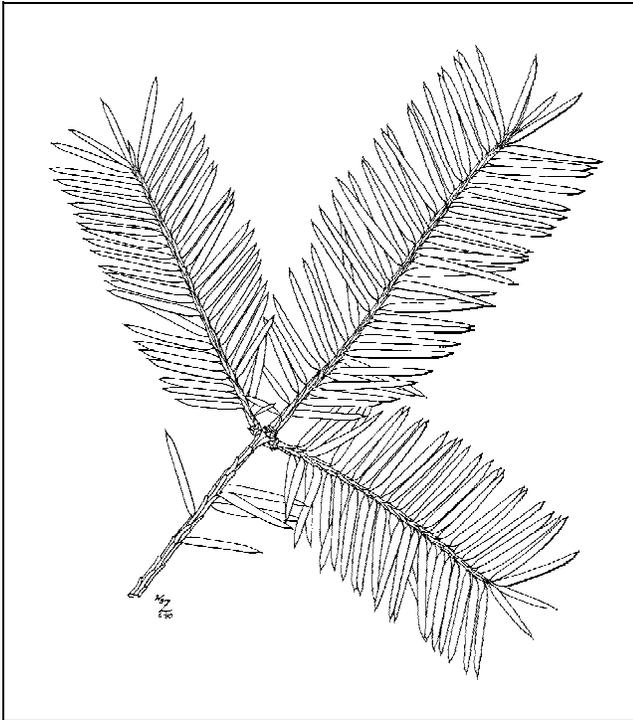


Figure 3. Foliage of Florida Torreya.

Diseases

Mushroom root rot and blight will infect some landscape plantings.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

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

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Florida Torreya prefers partial shade and well-drained, slightly acid, fertile soil. Plants should be watered faithfully and fertilized once in winter. Encourage use of this plant by placing it in a prominent location in a park, golf course, or other public area.

Propagation is by cuttings. Mature wood cuttings taken in winter root well. Seeds, when available, germinate slowly and sporadically.

Pests

Scales can be found infesting the twigs and foliage.