**Ternstroemia gymnanthera**

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**Introduction**

The dense, unusually dark green foliage takes on various shades of red depending upon the season and exposure, but always remains shining and evergreen (Fig. 1). The small, white, fragrant flowers are borne in clusters at the leaf axils and are followed by yellow to dark red fruits, eventually splitting open to reveal shiny, black seeds which persist through the winter.

**General Information**

Scientific name: *Ternstroemia gymnanthera*

Pronunciation: tern-STROE-mee-uh jim-NANTH-er-uh

Common name(s): Cleyera, Japanese Ternstroemia

Family: *Theaceae*

Plant type: tree

USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 10 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: screen; border; near a deck or patio; specimen; superior hedge

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

**Description**

Height: 12 to 20 feet

Spread: 5 to 10 feet

**Figure 1. Cleyera.**

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: entire  
Leaf shape: ovate  
Leaf venation: pinnate  
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

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems  
Current year stem/twig color: gray/silver  
Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade  
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam; slightly alkaline  
Drought tolerance: moderate  
Soil salt tolerances: poor  
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem  
Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
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

Cleyera is tolerant of full sun but grows best in partial shade in rich, moisture-retentive but well-drained, acid soil. The leaves will turn yellow if the soil is alkaline. Pruning is not usually necessary on slow-growing cleyera but new growth may be pinched to encourage compactness, particularly in the shade. The clean, neat, upright growth of cleyera makes it a good choice as an accent plant as well as a screen or hedge. Plant on three to five-foot centers to form a hedge of mass planting. Cleyera makes a good background plant for a shrub border which is to act as a screen or wind break.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pest problems are rare on cleyera with scale being the only one of occasional significance.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.