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

Description

Height: 10 to 30 feet

Spread: 4 to 10 feet

Plant habit: oval

Plant density: open

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Figure 1. Florida Tetrazygia.

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-577, 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.
**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

**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

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*Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.*
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.