**Introduction**

Yellow Elder is a small shrub native to the Caribbean basin (Fig. 1). Many stems originate close to the ground but they branch infrequently forming an open, leggy plant. Those in the full sun branch more and stay fuller than those in partial shade. Clear yellow flowers are produced daily, each lasting several hours before closing at night. New flowers open the next morning. Leaves stay dark green with little or no fertilizer.

**General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Turnea ulmifolia*
**Pronunciation:** TERN-nee-uh ul-miff-FOLE-lee-uh
**Common name(s):** Yellow Elder, Yellow Alder
**Family:** Turneraceae
**Plant type:** ground cover
**USDA hardiness zones:** 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)
**Planting month for zone 9:** year round
**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round
**Origin:** not native to North America
**Uses:** foundation; border; mass planting; ground cover; attracts butterflies
**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

**Description**

**Height:** 2 to 3 feet
**Spread:** 2 to 3 feet
**Plant habit:** round

![Figure 1. Yellow Elder.](image)

**Plant density:** moderate
**Growth rate:** moderate
**Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite
**Leaf type:** simple

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf margin: serrate
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: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
Current year stem/twig color: green
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: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
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: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: may self-seed each year
**Pest resistance**: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

**Use and Management**

Space plants several feet apart to form a ground cover in one season. To thicken the plant, cut stems back when they become leggy to force new branches close to the ground. To use as a low maintenance plant, consider locating Alder alone as an accent in a shrub border or in a ground cover to display its natural open habit. It will display its bright yellow flowers on the outside edge of the plant without pruning. Alder seedlings often germinate near the plants and can become weeds in the landscape.

Plant Yellow Alder in the full sun or partial shade for best form and flowering. Plants appear to adapt to a variety of soil conditions including alkaline pH and dry sites. Freezing temperatures kill plants to the ground, but warm spring weather brings them back to life in central and south Florida.

**Pests and Diseases**

White flies are often found on the foliage. Severe infestations can injure the plants. Aphids and scales can also infest the foliage but they are usually not to serious.