Introduction

Wild-Lime is a small tree native to south Florida and the Caribbean Basin (Fig. 1). It grows as an understory tree in the coastal upland plant communities on the lee side of the dunes in south Florida. Compound leaves have distinct wings along the leaf rachis and smell of lime when crushed. Most specimens in the woods have several stems emerging close to the ground. Specimens at nurseries can be grown with one or several trunks. Stems have sharp spines that can cause severe pain when they contact flesh.

General Information

Scientific name: Zanthoxylum fagara
Pronunciation: zan-THOCK-sill-lum fuh-GAR-ruh
Common name(s): Wild-Lime
Family: Rutaceae
Plant type: tree
USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: native to Florida
Uses: reclamation plant; specimen; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; border; attracts butterflies
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 15 to 25 feet
Spread: 15 to 20 feet
Plant habit: round
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: fine
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- **Leaf type:** odd-pinnately compound
- **Leaf margin:** crenate
- **Leaf shape:** obovate
- **Leaf venation:** pinnate
- **Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- **Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches
- **Leaf color:** green
- **Fall color:** no fall color change
- **Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

- **Flower color:** yellow
- **Flower characteristic:** flowers periodically throughout the year

**Trunk and Branches**

- **Trunk/bark/branches:** thorns present; can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; not particularly showy
- **Current year stem/twig color:** brown
- **Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

**Culture**

- **Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun
- **Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;
- **Drought tolerance:** high
- **Soil salt tolerances:** unknown
- **Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

- **Roots:** usually not a problem
- **Winter interest:** no special winter interest
- **Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding
- **Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

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

Use and Management

Although tolerance to shade allows Wild-Lime to germinate and grow successfully as an understory tree, it adapts well to the full sun. Plants grown in the full sun are full, nearly symmetrical and make a nice multi-trunked small patio tree. They can also be planted in a container or other area with limited soil space due to the small size of the mature plant.

Pests and Diseases

There are no serious pests or diseases that limit growth of this native tree.