



# Pategas on Plants

“A good book is like a garden carried in the pocket.”

— Arab proverb

**Stephen G. Pategas, ASLA**

American Society of Landscape Architects

**Kristin G. Pategas, APLD Associate Member**

Association of Professional Landscape Designers

## A Dream Hedge Shrub

Once upon a time (in the mid-1980s), plant material hedging choices for north and central Florida were limited. Old standbys like *Photinia* and *Pittosporum* were falling out of favor due to fungal disease. Meanwhile, the cry for lower maintenance and freeze tolerance left wannabe trees like *Viburnum* and *Ligustrum* off the ideal hedge list. Then a trip to a nature conservancy site along the Apalachicola River bluffs introduced us to a native shrub that ranges from the Florida Panhandle to Louisiana — *Illicium floridanum* (Family: Illiciaceae) or Florida anise.

Our search for sources of Florida anise began immediately, but no one grew this Florida native. However, a few growers were producing *Illicium parviflorum* (Zones 8B–9) or yellow anise. Native only to Florida, it can be distinguished from its cousin by its shorter, yellow-green leaves with rounded tips and half-inch yellow flowers. *I. parviflorum* performs well in full sun to partial shade and becomes somewhat drought tolerant. Sun-grown anise may take a whole growing season to fully adapt to shady locations.

Yellow anise can be grown as a dense 4-foot or higher hedge up to a rare

15 feet that keeps full to the ground in all light conditions. It is ideal when used as a hedge that travels through varying light levels. Note that new growth may temporarily wilt in full sun even when properly watered.

In the 1980s, it was a nightmare to find yellow anise in large quantities, but today this dream hedge plant is readily available in 3- and 7-gallon sizes. Find it at Beckel Landscape Nursery of Sanford, FL (407-323-6555), Buckhorn Nursery of Wauchula, FL (941-773-6662), and Grace Nurseries of Apopka, FL (407-884-9843).

The once rare-to-the-trade *I. floridanum* has ever-green, glossy, dark green acuminate leaves; full growth to the ground; and the ability to thrive in moderate to dense shade. It can ultimately reach a height of 8 to 14 feet, but can easily be maintained as a 4- to 6-foot hedge or a specimen multitrunk tree.

Florida anise prefers moist conditions, but once established, can be somewhat drought tolerant. In spring, small 1-inch nodding red-purple flowers appear. It can be found at Boynton Botanicals of Boynton Beach, FL (561-737-1490), C. J. Landscape Nursery of Orange City, FL (904-775-9646), and Monroe Nurseries of Lake Monroe, FL (407-322-7631).

All *Illicium* are propagated from semiripe cuttings taken in the summer. Scale is noted in the literature as a pest of anise, but it appears to be very rare. Have you ever seen scale on them? The licorice or anise-scented fragrance of the foliage repels leaf-

chomping insects, thus its lack of pest problems. However, it must be cut, crushed, or stroked for the fragrance to reach our nostrils. Dieback of selected stems or branches occurs occasionally.

Anise (or *Viburnum* for that matter) is unsuitable for shearing due to its large leaf size. Save the shears for podocarpus. There are two cultivars of *I. floridanum*: ‘Semmes’ with white flowers and ‘Mexicana’ (native to Mexico) with red blossoms. — SGP/KGP

Kristin and Stephen are co-owners of Hortus Oasis in Winter Park, FL, providing garden design and garden photography services. Contact them at [garden@hortusoasis.com](mailto:garden@hortusoasis.com).



*Illicium parviflorum* in the landscape



*Illicium floridanum* with acuminate leaves



*Illicium parviflorum* with rounded leaves

Photos by Stephen G. Pategas