

Abelia x grandiflora: Glossy Abelia¹

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<https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>

IFAS Assessment

South

Low Invasion Risk

Low Risk for invasion, therefore Not considered a problem species at this time. May be recommended by IFAS. Reassessed every 10 years.

[view assessment](#)

IFAS Assessment

Central, North

Moderate Risk/Evaluate

This species was evaluated with the Predictive Tool and received an intermediate score (1-6). The Secondary Screening was implemented, but not enough information was available to reach a conclusion.

[view assessment](#)

This document is a part of a series originally written by Edward F. Gilman.

Introduction

Glossy abelia, also called largeflower abelia (hybrid of *A. chinensis* and *A. uniflora*), is a fine-textured, semi-evergreen, sprawling shrub with 1½-inch-long red-tinged leaves arranged along multiple thin, arching stems (Figures 1 and 2). The stems arise from the ground in a vase shape, spreading apart as they ascend into the foliage. This plant reaches a height and spread of 6 to 8 feet, but certain cultivars have a more compact growth habit. Glossy abelia is unique in that the leaves (Figure 3) retain their reddish foliage (excluding certain cultivars) throughout summer, whereas many species with this coloration lose it later in the summer. While it is evergreen in its southern range, glossy abelia will lose 50% of its leaves in colder climates, and the remaining leaves will take on a more pronounced reddish coloration. This plant blooms from spring through fall, producing terminal clusters of small,

delicate white to pink tubular flowers (Figure 4). Certain cultivars may have varying colored flowers (Table 1).



Figure 1. Full form, natural—*Abelia x grandiflora*: glossy abelia.

Credit: UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Full form, manicured—*Abelia x grandiflora*: glossy abelia.

Credit: UF/IFAS



Figure 3. Leaf—*Abelia x grandiflora*: glossy abelia.

Credit: UF/IFAS



Figure 4. Flower—*Abelia x grandiflora*: glossy abelia.

Credit: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Abelia x grandiflora*

Pronunciation: uh-BEEL-ee-uh gran-dif-FLOR-uh

Common name(s): glossy abelia, largeflower abelia

Family: *Caprifoliaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 5A through 9B (Figures 5 and 6)

USDA Hardiness Zones 5A-9B

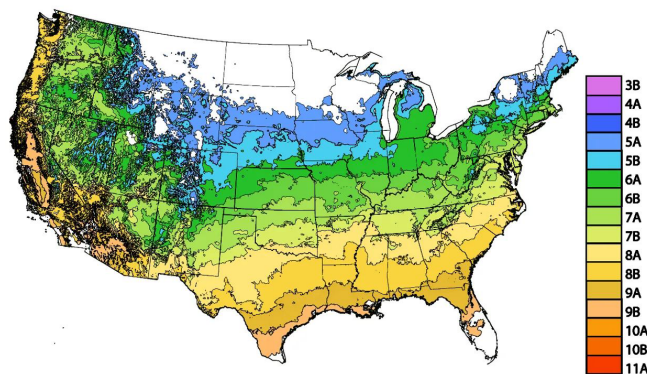


Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting zone—USDA Hardiness Zones 5A-9B

Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit

<https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> for specific zone information.

USDA Hardiness Zones 7B-9B

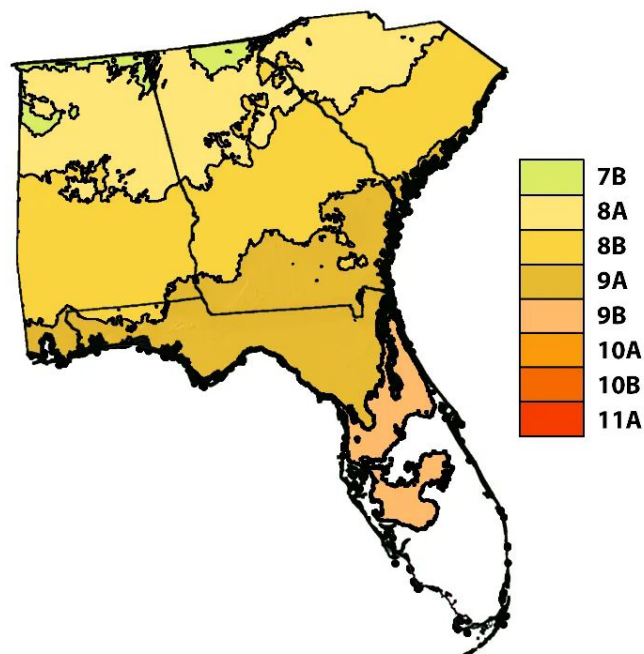


Figure 6. Shaded area represents potential planting zone in the SE Region—USDA Hardiness Zones 7B-9B

Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit

<https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> for specific zone information.

Planting month for zone 7: year-round

Planting month for zone 8: year-round

Planting month for zone 9: year-round

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not considered a problem species at this time and may be recommended by UF/IFAS faculty (reassess in 10 years)

Uses: border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; superior hedge; specimen; screen; attracts butterflies, hummingbirds, and other pollinators

Availability: plant is readily available

Description

Height: 6 to 8 feet; dependent upon cultivar selection

Spread: 6 to 8 feet; dependent upon cultivar selection

Plant habit: vase shape; round; upright; arching

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: whorled

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, semi-evergreen in colder weather

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: purple or red new growth, dark green mature foliage; cultivars may have variegated or golden foliage and may lack red coloration.

Fall color: purple following cold weather

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white; pink; dependent upon cultivar selection (Table 1)

Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer flowering; fall flowering; pleasant fragrance

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: less than 1/2 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: tan

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: reddish

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in partial shade; plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; clay; sand; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: poor

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to reddish-purple foliage in cool weather (dependent upon cultivar selection)

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

Use and Management

Glossy abelia grows in an upright, spreading vase shape if left unpruned, with numerous thin stems arising from the ground. Stems eventually branch near their tips, forming a shrub with a full top and a thin bottom. New foliage emerges as a maroon color, fading to dark green as it matures, lending a reddish cast to the plant during active growth (excluding some cultivars). The small white to pink tubular flowers bloom on new growth and add color continuously during the summer months.

The arching nature of glossy abelia makes it ideal for use as a specimen, foundation plant, or shrub border. It also can be planted along a steep bank for erosion control or may be clipped into a hedge. If glossy abelia is pruned into a hedge, ensure the top of the hedge is clipped narrower than the bottom to allow adequate light to reach the lower foliage. This will promote overall plant fullness. Glossy abelia benefits from springtime pruning and will require occasional thinning to keep it in bounds as a hedge. Thinning this plant will help light reach the interior foliage, stimulating branching and creating a fuller plant.

Glossy abelia enjoys fairly rich, moist but well-drained soil in a full sun or lightly shaded location and has good drought tolerance. Plants become thin and unattractive in the shade and do not flower. Plant on 4- to 6-foot centers to form a screen or foundation or plant, slightly closer for a hedge. The foliage darkens during the winter, but plants generally remain full during the cold months.

Propagation is by cuttings of long, leafless hardwood stems taken in November to January.

Design Considerations

Glossy abelia works well as a background or massing plant to highlight the forms and colors of companion plants. The fine texture and small leaves of the abelia will show well with contrasting plant features, such as large leaves, coarse texture, thick stems, and dark green color. Contrasting size and shape, such as low-growing groundcover with a sprawling, mounding form, will emphasize the upright, vase shape of glossy abelia. To create plant masses in large areas, select plants with similar characteristics that blend with glossy abelia. Similar textures include thin blades and clumping, arching forms of grasses and other vase-shaped, small-leaved shrubs

Pests and Diseases

Pest issues of minor concern include aphids. No diseases of major concern.

Table 1. Popular abelia cultivars in the industry, and their size and notable traits.

Cultivar Name	Cultivar Image	Size (Height x Width)	Notable Traits
'Apple Perfection'		4-5' H x 4-5' W	Bright green semi-evergreen foliage with yellow-orange new growth, lightly fragrant white flowers bloom spring through fall, bronze calyces provide added interest
'Brilliantina'		3-4' H x 3-5' W	Variegated evergreen golden and light green foliage, white fragrant flowers bloom spring through fall, light pink calyces provide added interest, medium growth habit that is more compact than other cultivars, mounded plant shape
'Confetti'		3' H x 3' W	Variegated evergreen pink, white, and green foliage with color increasing following cooler weather, white flowers bloom during the spring, compact growth habit
'Canyon Creek'		3-4' H x 3-4' W	Dark green-bronze tinged evergreen foliage with color increasing following cooler weather, produces tubular light pink-white flowers blooming summer through fall, mounded growth form

Cultivar Name	Cultivar Image	Size (Height x Width)	Notable Traits
'Edward Goucher'		2-3' H x 2-3' W	Dark green semi-evergreen foliage that takes on purple coloration following cooler weather, abundant lavender-pink flowers bloom summer through fall, red calyces provide added interest, superior to most cultivars
'Francis Mason'		2-5' H x 3-5' W	Golden, yellow, and green variegated foliage with green new growth, light pink lightly fragrant flowers bloom summer through fall, compact growth habit
'Funshine'		2-3' H x 2-3' W	Light green foliage with gold-orange new growth, pink-lavender fragrant flowers bloom spring through fall, compact growth habit
'Mucho Gusto'		2-3.5' H x 3-5' W	Variegated deciduous green and white foliage, small white fragrant flowers bloom during summer, medium height

Cultivar Name	Cultivar Image	Size (Height x Width)	Notable Traits
'Rose Creek'		2-3' H x 2-3' W	Dark green semi-evergreen foliage with pink-tinged new growth, heavy production of white flowers bloom spring through fall
'Sherwoodii'		3-4' H x 3-5' W	Dark green semi-evergreen foliage takes on purplish coloration following cooler weather, lightly fragrant lavender flowers bloom summer through fall, bronze calyces provide added interest, dwarf cultivar with smaller leaves and flowers
'Sunny Anniversary'		3-4' H x 3-4' W	Dark green deciduous foliage, yellow-pink fragrant flowers bloom spring through fall flowering, mounded to fountain-like growth habit, medium height
'Suntastic Radiance'		2-3' H x 3-5' W	Silvery-green to white evergreen variegated foliage, white flowers bloom spring through fall, dwarf cultivar, compact growth habit

Credits: Apple Perfection Photo Courtesy of Jeff McMillian—Almost Eden; Brilliantina Photo Courtesy of Proven Winners; Confetti Photo Courtesy of Devil Mountain Wholesale Nursery; Canyon Creek Photo Courtesy of Jeff McMillian—Almost Eden; Edward Goucher Photo Courtesy of Jeff McMillian—Almost Eden; Francis Mason Photo Courtesy of Jeff McMillian—Almost Eden; Funshine Photo Courtesy of Proven Winners; Mucho Gusto Photo Courtesy of Proven Winners; Rose Creek Photo Courtesy of Keighly Graves, UF/IFAS; Sherwoodii Photo Courtesy of Devil Mountain Wholesale Nursery; Sunny Anniversary Photo Courtesy of Proven Winners; Suntastic Radiance Photo Courtesy of Devil Mountain Wholesale Nursery

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