

Star Anise

Illicium parviflorum

Star anise is a gardener's dream because it's pest-free, cold-hardy and easy to grow. This evergreen shrub is native to the northwest Florida panhandle. Star anise appreciates rich soil and ample moisture but will easily survive harsher conditions. The branches droop to the ground giving a rounded, open canopy in the shade, ideal for natural settings, or in sunny locations it can be pruned into dense hedges or windbreaks. The small, greenish-yellow flowers appear in spring and are followed in late summer to fall by star-shaped, many-seeded pods which cling to the stems. The leaves give off a distinctive licorice like aroma when bruised or crushed. Star anise grows well in sun or shade but thins out in the shade. Once established it will need watering only during long periods of drought and pruning once a year to maintain its shrub form. It can be pruned and trained into a small, multi-trunked or single-trunked tree. Plant on 5 to 7 foot centers to establish an unpruned screen, closer for a tall clipped hedge. It grows too large for a residential foundation planting but can be pruned into a small, multi-stemmed tree.

Type: perennial

USDA hardiness zones: 7b through 10a

Uses: hedge; espalier; screen; border

Origin: native to Florida

Height: 15 to 20 feet **Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

Plant spacing: 3 to 5 feet

Light requirement: part shade to part sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Invasive potential: native not known to be invasive

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

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Photo: UF/IFAS