

FLORIDA YEW

Taxus floridana Nutt. ex Chapman

Synonyms: *Taxus baccata* L. var. *floridana*
(Nuttall ex Chapman) Pilger

Family: Taxaceae (yew)

FNAI Ranks: G2/S2

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Endangered



Needles. © Robert Gundy

Field Description: Small, evergreen **tree** to 9 m tall, often with several trunks. **Stems** spreading, with purplish-brown, flaking bark. **Needles** less than 2.5 cm long, aromatic when crushed, soft, flattened with pointed tips; dark green above, light green below with gray stripes flanking the midvein; needles twisted into a single plane and forming flattened sprays along the branches. **Male and female cones** on separate trees; **male cones** less than 5 mm long, usually many per branch, yellow-green; **female "cones"** consist of a single seed enclosed by a fleshy, red cup (**aril**) about 2.5 cm long; aril dries and falls, leaving the exposed seed behind on the twig.

Similar Species: Sprouts of Torrey tree (*Torreya taxifolia*) resemble Florida yew. Its needles have pale stripes below but are stiff and sharp and have an unpleasant odor when crushed.

Related Rare Species: Sprouts of Torrey tree (*Torreya taxifolia*) resemble Florida yew. Its needles have pale stripes below but are stiff and sharp and have an unpleasant odor when crushed.

Florida yew

Taxus floridana

Habitat: Rich, deciduous forests on lower and mid-slopes of ravines and steepheads on the east side of the Apalachicola River; rarely cedar swamps.

Best Survey Season: Cones and arils most obvious in late winter and early spring; needles and bark are distinctive all year.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to western Gadsden and Liberty counties, FL.

Conservation Status: Most of the 20 remaining populations are protected in Torreya State Park and a private conservation preserve.

Protection and Management: Avoid logging in ravines and steepheads. Purchase or protect with conservation easements all populations on private land. Concern about exploitation for anti-cancer compounds has been allayed by recent successes with synthetic taxol.

References: Becker 1999, Coile 2000, Godfrey 1988, Kral 1983, Kwit et al. 1998, Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000b.



Bark. © Robert Gundy

