



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Iva frutescens*¹

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Introduction

The Marsh Elder is a tardily deciduous maritime shrub that is native to coastal saline wetlands in the southeastern part of the country. Its native habitat includes the saline grasses and rushes. The leaves of this shrub are dull green and lanceolate and have serrate margins. The roughly pubescent leaves have three prominent veins originating together at the base of the leaf. They bow away from each other and partially come back together near the tip of the leaf. This 4- to 6-foot-tall shrub has greenish flower heads that are borne terminally in panicles. Flowers are abundant and appear from July to September. The small fruits are dark purplish brown achenes that are covered with pale dots of resin.

General Information

Scientific name: *Iva frutescens*

Pronunciation: EYE-vuh froo-TESS-enz

Common name(s): Marsh-Elder

Family: *Compositae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 8 through 10 (Fig. 1)

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: border

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Description

Height: 4 to 6 feet

Spread: 4 to 6 feet

Plant habit: upright; oval

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: lanceolate

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: green

Flower characteristic: summer flowering; inconspicuous and not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Fruit color: purple

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

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

Current year stem/twig color: unknown

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: well-drained; extended flooding; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: good

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

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

Use and Management

Marsh Elder adapts well to clipping so it can be used in the landscape as a low hedge or border plant. Its tolerance to wet soil and compact habit makes it well suited for planting near a foundation of a building.

Iva frutescens is native to Florida's coastal marshes and shores and requires a full sun position in the landscape. It grows in well-drained basic (high pH) soils but is moderately tolerant of drought and wetness. Its ability to grow in brackish water makes it a good candidate for embankment restoration and stabilization.

