

# Carolina jessamine

(*Gelsemium sempervirens*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

Carolina jessamine is an evergreen, woody, climbing or trailing vine that occurs naturally in mesic and hydric hammocks, pine flatwoods, thickets, bottomland swamps and ruderal areas. It sometimes grows as an open trailing groundcover in the woods and also creates cascades of brilliant yellow as it grows up into trees and trails off branches. Its fragrant flowers typically bloom from winter through spring and will attract hummingbirds, butterflies and large bees who will wriggle their way inside its tubular flowers.



Photo by Emily Bell

Carolina jessamine flowers are lemon yellow and tubular with rounded, five-lobed calyces. They may be solitary or clustered. The plant's dark green, glossy leaves are petiolate and elliptic to lanceolate with pointed tips. They are oppositely arranged. Leaf margins are entire. Seeds are flat with thin wings and are born in two-parted capsules.

The species epithet *sempervirens* is from the Latin *semper*, or "always," and *virens*, meaning "to be green or verdant."

**Family:** Gelsemiaceae (Gelsemium family)

**Native range:** Panhandle, north and central peninsula, and Martin and Palm Beach counties

To see where natural populations of Carolina jessamine have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).

**Lifespan:** Perennial

**Soil:** Dry to moderately moist soils

**Exposure:** Full sun to moderate shade

**Growth habit:** 20'+ long in multiple directions

**Propagation:** Division, cuttings, seed

**Florida regions of landscape suitability:** North, Central, South

**Garden tips:** Carolina jessamine is a great plant for winter color and is one of the first flowers to emerge in Florida in early January. This easy-to-grow vine adapts well to fences and trellises, where its small leaves and twining stems create an airy, light appearance. It can also be used as a groundcover or be allowed to climb trees, where it will flower in the canopy. It grows moderately fast but can be contained or shaped with pruning. It may sucker and spread if allowed to run under mulch.

**Caution:** All parts of this plant are poisonous if swallowed. Do not plant in areas frequented by children or pets.

Plants are often available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants.

Visit [www.PlantRealFlorida.org](http://www.PlantRealFlorida.org) to find a nursery in your area.

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