

Carolina Jessamine

Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) is one of the most beautiful vines of the South. It covers fences and trees in open woodlands and along roadsides throughout the Southeast with its slender vines and bright yellow flowers. It is the state flower of South Carolina.



Carolina jessamine is South Carolina's state flower.
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Mature Height/Spread

Carolina jessamine grows to 20 feet or more when grown as a vine. It can also be grown as a ground cover, maintained with a yearly cutting in late spring after flowering to 3 feet or less.

Growth Rate

This vine's growth rate is moderate, growing rapidly once established or with rich soil and adequate water.

Ornamental Features

Sweetly scented, golden yellow flowers cover the cascading, fine textured foliage from February to April. The trumpet-shaped blooms are 1 to 1½

inches long and are attractive to butterflies. The shiny evergreen leaves are 1 to 3 inches long on 10- to-20-foot tall vines. In colder areas of the state, it may be semi-evergreen and the leaves may turn bronze in winter.

Landscape Use

Carolina jessamine is easy to grow. It is attractive on an arbor where the slender branches hung with yellow flowers can be seen from below. This plant will stay in scale and can be used on decks and porches and near patios and entryways. It is good in containers and as a ground cover along steep banks to help control erosion.

Carolina jessamine tolerates either full sun or partial shade. Flowering is more prolific and foliage growth is denser in full sun.

This vine is very adaptable and will grow in a variety of conditions. For best results, plant it in rich, well-drained soil. Moist soil is ideal, but the vine is able to withstand periods of drought once established.

Plant from containers during cool weather, spacing 3 feet apart for ground cover and 4 to 8 feet apart for wall or trellis climber.

Fertilize while the plant is actively growing with moderate amounts of a balanced fertilizer. Do not overfeed, since excessive fertilizer can reduce flowering.

Older vines that become top heavy or sparse can be pruned back to a few feet above ground level after flowering. Remove dead or broken branches and shape the plant each year after bloom. Mow groundcovers every few years to maintain density.

Cultivars & Related Species

'Pride of Augusta' - also known as 'Plena' - is a popular double-flowered cultivar that stays in bloom longer. The flowers are very attractive at close range.



'Pride of Augusta' Carolina jessamine
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Problems

All parts of this plant are poisonous. The sap may cause skin irritation in sensitive individuals. Children can be poisoned by sucking the nectar from the flowers. Insects or diseases rarely trouble Carolina jessamine. Deer will not eat it.

Swamp jessamine (*Gelsemium rankanii*) is a native southeastern species. It flowers heavily in fall as well as in spring and has yellow flowers that are not fragrant.

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