

# *Jasminum nudiflorum*

## Winter Jasmine



Discovering eye-catching, ornamental interest in the winter landscape can be a challenge, however, when most other plant and pollinators lie dormant, winter jasmine creates beautiful blooms. A member of the olive family (Oleaceae), *Jasminum nudiflorum* is a hardy member of a genus sometimes known for its fragrant tropical and subtropical species. Blossoms of this small, deciduous shrub appear before the leaves (its specific epithet means “naked flowers”), making the flowers even more showy on an otherwise bare plant.

The small, bright yellow flowers are described as either non-fragrant or possessing a delicate, mossy scent, however, they do not summon the delightful olfactory sensations that makes its genus name synonymous with perfume. Fortunately, this shortcoming is redeemed by an extremely lengthy period of bloom, which may last from January to March. Compounding the seasonal interest offered by its flowers, winter jasmine also delights with arching, willowy green stems that provide further visual relief from winter’s tonal monotony.

Perhaps unsurprising for a plant that blooms at the most unforgiving time of year, winter jasmine is fairly tough. It tolerates a wide range of both soil and light conditions, though it grows and flowers best in full sun to part shade in well-drained, loamy soil. Gardeners also appreciate its versatility of form, growing it as a small three to four feet tall shrub, spreading ground cover, or even training it up a vertical surface with supports. Its long, arching branches also make it a great choice for cascading over a wall or terrace.

Winter jasmine is native to China. It was introduced to the West in 1844, and first described by English botanist John Lindley in the *Journal of the Horticultural Society of London* in 1846. It has gained popularity in Europe and North America as an ornamental, even naturalizing in parts of France and the United States.

The Arnold Arboretum has grown winter jasmine since 1885, beginning with a cultivated plant attributed to the Arboretum's first director, Charles Sprague Sargent, perhaps cut from his own garden. Today, accessions grow in two locations—in Explorers Garden on Bussey Hill and the terraces of the Leventritt Shrub and Vine Garden. Discover them in bloom this winter for a foreshadowing of spring.

