

Senna pendula

Christmas Senna, Golden Senna, Butterfly Senna,
Climbing Senna

Fabaceae

Flower Display: A



Plant for sale
Fort Myers, Florida

Mid November



Fort Myers, Florida

Early November

A true chameleon, this sprawling shrub can morph into a clambering vine or be coaxed into a small unsteady treelet. Each year, it seems that the entire population of *Senna pendula* blooms simultaneously so that there is a loud shout of yellow over a wide geographic area. The precise time of seasonal flowering may vary from year to year so that in some years, early November heralds the best colors, while in the successive year, late December becomes the showiest period. However, more frequently, November has the best show. Depending on the year, the average flowering days can be as short as 20 days or as long as 60 days. Some plants will flower again in the spring. The flowers are slightly nodding and slow to fully open. After flowering, many unsightly seed pods hang from *S. pendula*'s gangly and brittle limbs. Once confined to yards, it has now taken roots along some highways of south Florida. Although increasingly noticed growing wayward in the state, it is rarely seen in Central America or the Caribbean.



Lehigh Acres, Florida

Early November



North Fort Myers, Florida

Mid November

Christmas Senna

Syn: *Cassia bicapsularis*, *C. coluteoides*

Origin: Brazil, Peru to Paraguay

Zone: 10a-12b, 28°F

Growth Rate: Fast

Flowering Months: Mid October—December

Flowering Days: 31

Leaf Persistence: Evergreen or Semi-Deciduous

Messiness: Moderate

Salt Tolerance: High

Drought Tolerance: Medium

Nutritional Requirements: Medium

Potential Pests: Caterpillars, Hibiscus Mealybugs, Scales

Typical Dimensions: 10'x12'

Uses: Not recommended in Florida



Fort Myers, Florida

Early December



Fort Myers

Mid November

The cloudless sulphur caterpillar is green when feeding on green leaves and yellow when feeding on yellow petals.

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It was once commonly sold in garden center under the botanical name of *Cassia bicapsularis*. Hardy to 28°F, it will re-grow if the top is killed by frost. Its natural habit is to at first grow low then clamber up pine trees, cabbage palms and whatever else will accommodate it. *Senna pendula* is most spectacular if kept as a pruned shrub, no taller than 10 feet. When trained as a small single-trunk treelet, it must be staked practically its entire life to prevent toppling over. Moist soils help shorten its life often by rotting its roots or causing it to fall. Even under good growing conditions, most *S. pendula* formed into treelets usually do not live beyond four years. It requires frequent pruning to keep a nice tree-like shape. If not, it could revert to its shrubby or viny forms. However, excessive pruning stresses the treelet often resulting in partial defoliation. It is a larval plant for the cloudless sulphur caterpillar. Invasive in central and south Florida, it is not recommended for cultivation.



Fort Myers, Florida

Late November

Leaves: Even-pinnate, alternate, up to 4 inches long, increasing in size toward the tip, usually 4 pairs, but 2-8 pairs of opposite oblong leaflets

Flowers: Bright yellow or yellow-green petals, about 1 ½ inches across, with 6 protruding curved stamens and 1 staminode, in 3-12 flowered racemes near stem tips

Fruits: Pods, cylindric or string-bean like, slender, glabrous, dark green before maturity, with 2 longitudinal indentations, to 9 inches long

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