**Forsythia x intermedia** - *Forsythia* (Oleaceae)

*Forsythia x intermedia* is a vigorously growing shrub with showy, bright yellow, early spring flowers emerging before the foliage. *Forsythia* is often used as a spring accent or as an informal barrier hedge.

**FEATURES**

**Form**
- medium-sized ornamental shrub (sometimes pruned into small tree form)
- maturing at about 8' tall x 10' wide, although sometimes larger
- upright oval, open, and straggly growth habit in youth quickly becomes an arching rounded, thick, and semi-pendulous growth habit with maturity
- rapid growth rate

**Culture**
- full sun to partial shade
- very adaptable to poor soils, rocky soils, dry soils, compacted soils, various soil pHs, drought, heavy pruning, and pollution (and is therefore very urban tolerant)
- few disease or pest problems
- abundantly available in B&B or container forms
- reduced flowering occurs in shady situations, and vegetative growth becomes more leggy

**Foliage**
- medium green leaves are about 4" long, opposite to sub-opposite, ovate to elliptical, and serrated on the upper half of the leaf blade, with an acuminate tip
- autumn color is usually yellowish green and ornamentally ineffective

**Flowers**
- bright yellow, usually from late Mar. to mid-Apr. and effective for 1-2 weeks
- flowers occur in clusters, emerging before the foliage; the 4 petals on each flower are fused at the base
- floral buds may be killed when winter temperatures fall to between -5 to -15 degrees F unless insulated by snow
- opened flowers are not very tolerant of moderate freezes
- floral buds are set in the autumn, so heavy pruning must not be done in winter

**Fruits**
- small brown capsules are ornamentally insignificant

**Twigs**
- green when new, becoming olive-brown to yellow-brown with maturity; have abundant, raised lenticels; and a combination of semi-pendulous and upturned growth habit with age

**Trunk**
- the many basal branches become beige and slightly rough trunks with age

**USAGE**

**Function**
- spring accent, row planting, group or mass planting, formal or informal hedge, border, entranceway, non-thorny barrier, or embankment shrub; also can be limbed up into small tree form
- sometimes improperly used at foundations (where it becomes too large) or pruned into formal hedge or topiary forms (where the need for pruning is frequent, and the shrub becomes leggy and devoid of most of its potential flower buds)

**Texture**
- medium texture in foliage and medium-bold texture when bare
- thick density in foliage and when bare (for mature plants)

**Assets**
- showy early spring yellow inflorescences
- rapid growth and establishment
- urban tolerant

**Liabilities**
- floral display often diminished by frosts
- often spreads rapidly beyond its intended boundaries
- growth is often unkempt and straggly, unless judiciously pruned

**Habitat**
- Zones 4 to 8
- a hybrid of Weeping Forsythia (*Forsythia suspensa* var. sieboldii) and Greenstem Forsythia (*Forsythia viridissima*), with both parents native to China

**SELECTIONS**

**Alternates**
- early spring-flowering shrubs (*Abeliophyllum distichum*, *Fothergilla gardenii*, *Hamamelis x intermedia*, *Pieris japonica*, *Viburnum carlesii*, etc.)
- fast-growing and urban tolerant shrubs (*Aronia arbutifolia*, *Cornus sericea*, *Salix pupurea*, *Viburnum dentatum*, *Weigela florida*, etc.)

**Cultivars – Variants – Related species**
- There are dozens of *Forsythia x intermedia* cultivars commonly grown today, which differ only slightly in growth habit, mature height and width, floral density, petal openness, color intensity, and relatively poor floral bud hardiness. These include 'Karl Sax', 'Lynwood' ('Lynwood Gold'), 'Spectabilis', and 'Spring Glory'
- *Forsythia 'Meadowlark'* - a hybrid of *F. ovata* and *F. europaea*; floral buds are hardy to -35 degrees F; nearly as showy in flower as other *Forsythia* cultivars and having dark green foliage, but with an arching, prostrate, sprawling, unkempt growth habit, needing lots of room, to 9' x 12' if never pruned; young transplants often do not flower heavily in youth
- *Forsythia 'Northern Sun'* - similar to 'Meadowlark', except floral buds are hardy to -30 degrees F