

## *Hymenosporum flavum*- Sweetshade Tree

Sweetshade or *Hymenosporum flavum* is a member of the family Pittosporaceae. This family consists of 8 or 9 woody genera of trees, shrubs or vines from Old World (Australia, Southeast Asia and Southern Africa) tropical and temperate areas but has its greatest diversity in Australia. Family members have resinous stems, simple, rather linear, evergreen leaves and blue, white or yellow flowers with 5 sepals, 5 petals and 5 stamens. Sweetshade has many characteristics typical of its family. It is a native of eastern Australia and thus thrives in the Mediterranean climate of Southern California. Sweetshade trees have a distinctive shape in that they are tall (reaching 20 to 40 ft) and slender due to their short and widely spaced lateral branches. They are green all year round with glossy, firm to leathery leaves. Sweetshade trees are spectacular in bloom which lasts for many weeks from spring to early summer. The flowers are clustered and open a creamy off-white color but turn orangey, yellow with age. The most pleasant aspect of the flowers is their strong sweet scent that “perfumes” their immediate environment. These trees tolerate full sun to partial shade but need well drained soil and protection from wind. You can view this species in the median of Victoria Avenue between Washington and Hill streets.

Another close relative of Sweetshade, also in the Pittosporaceae, is *Pittosporum tobira* or Mock Orange. It is commonly planted on public parkways in Riverside and is originally from subtropical coastal forests of China, Japan and Korea, but is commonly used as dense hedges in the Southern California landscape. The flowers are also clustered, cream colored and very fragrant. The leaves are thick, glossy and dark green with recurved margins. A variegated variety is very common. It has leaves with gray-green centers and white margins.

