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Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ PROGRAM

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Halesia carolina: Carolina Silverbell[1]

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Introduction

A North American native tree, Carolina Silverbell grows into a 20 to 40-foot-tall tree with a 15 to 30-foot-spread and a pyramidal silhouette. Some horticulturists do not separate this from *Halesia monticola* . The two to four-inch-long leaves turn yellow in fall and are among the first to drop in autumn. The tree prefers sandy loam and begins blooming when only 10 to 12 feet tall. The white, bell-shaped, showy blossoms are borne in two to five-inch-long clusters. Flowering occurs along last year's branches in mid-May. Because the flowers point downward, they are partially hidden by the foliage and best viewed from below. Other ornamental features are the yellow fall color and the bark, which peels off in large, flat scales. The pale yellow fruits are quite attractive as they hang down from last year's branches. Carolina Silverbell may transplant poorly in the fall.



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Halesia carolina*: Carolina Silverbell
Credit: Ed Gilman

General Information

Scientific name: *Halesia carolina*

Pronunciation: hal-EE-zhee-uh kair-oh-LYE-nuh

Common name(s): Carolina Silverbell

Family: *Styracaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5A through 8B (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: specimen; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; container or planter

Availability: not native to North America

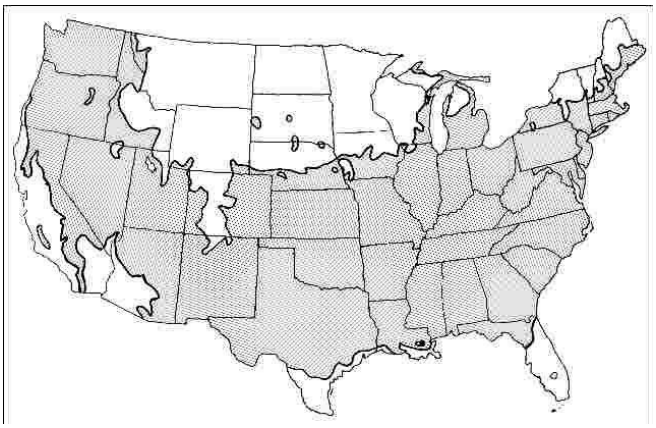

Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 40 to 60 feet

Spread: 15 to 30 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: round, upright/erect, vase

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrulate

Leaf shape: oblong, elliptic (oval), ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

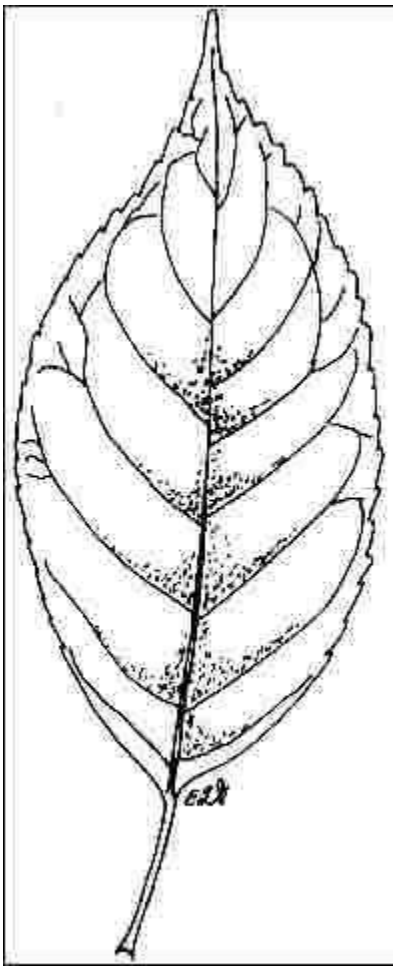

Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: yellow, green

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade

Soil tolerances: sand; loam; clay; acidic; slightly alkaline; well-drained; occasionally wet

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: low

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

This tree is interesting all year long, with attractive medium green foliage, pretty flowers, showy fruits, and

exfoliating bark. It branches low to the ground, making a nice lawn or specimen tree and when pruned to one central leader can be used as a street tree in residential areas. The bark shows off nicely with foliage removed from the lower branches, and multistemmed specimens come-to-life when lit from below at nighttime. It is a splendid small tree to locate near a patio or deck.

An understory tree best suited for a partially shaded or shaded location, Silverbell prefers moist, fertile soil with an accumulation of leaf litter and/or mulch. Water the tree during a drought and avoid compacted soil.

Propagation is by seeds sown as soon as ripe or stratified, and by layering, root cuttings, and greenwood cuttings. Small trees and seedlings transplant easily.

One cultivar is listed: `Rosea', with pale pink flowers.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

[1] This document is ENH447, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture. Original publication date November 1993. Revised October 1998. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu for the currently supported version of this publication. © UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 *To learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water and natural resources, visit ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/.*

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