ENH449
doi.org/10.32473/EDIS-ST290-1993

Halesia diptera: Two-Winged Silverbell[1]

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson[2]

https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/

Introduction

Two-Winged Silverbell is a wonderful, small, deciduous native tree, reaching 20 to 30 feet in height, with a fairly dense, rounded silhouette when grown in the full sun. In its native habitat as an understory tree along stream banks it appears more open. Branches grow from the base of the tree forming a multi-trunked tree suited for specimen or patio planting. Although native to the deep south, it is, unfortunately, known little and not grown by many nurseries. In springtime, the trees produce a multitude of beautiful, showy, bell-shaped white flowers which are followed by two-winged, 1.5 to 2-inch-long drupes.

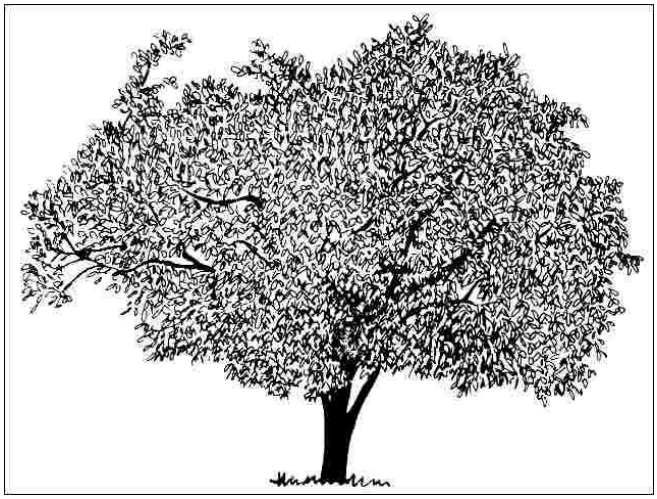

Figure 1. Middle-aged *Halesia diptera*: Two-Winged Silverbell

General Information

Scientific name: *Halesia diptera*

Pronunciation: hal-EE-zhee-uh DIP-ter-uh

Common name(s): Two-Winged Silverbell, Snowdrop Tree

Family: *Styracaceae*

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

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; specimen; deck or patio; container or planter

Availability: not native to North America

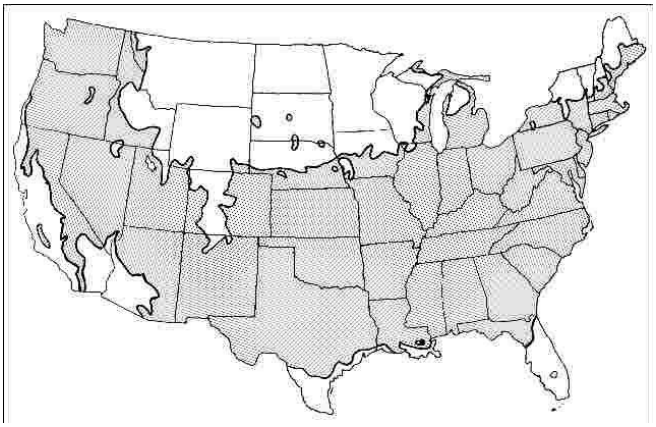

Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 20 to 30 feet

Spread: 20 to 30 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: round, vase

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval), obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

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

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

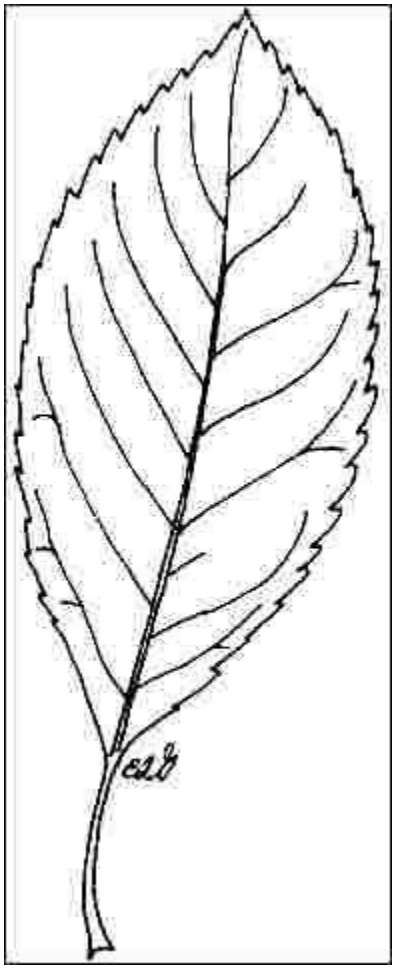

Figure 3. Foliage

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

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: partial sun or partial shade, shade tolerant, full sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

Two-Winged Silverbell is slowly gaining in popularity for landscape use, and is ideal for naturalizing in locations with moist soil. It is not drought-tolerant and should always be located in a protected spot sheltered from full day sun and wind. Grows best with mulch beneath the entire canopy. It makes a nice addition to the shaded shrub border with its spring flower display and creates an excellent understory tree beneath large natives. Use it as you would Flowering Dogwood. Also used as a patio tree

for creating shade in a small, residential landscape. Not a tree for planting in the open or along a street.

Two-Winged Silverbell should be located in partial shade on very well-drained acid soil where leaf litter and mulch are allowed to accumulate. It grows in full sun in the north, adapts to almost total shade. It is not adapted to clay.

Variety *magniflora* has larger flowers and is a vigorous grower in the South.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. It is amazingly pest free.

[1] This document is ENH449, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. 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/.*

[2] Edward F. Gilman, professor emeritus, UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, UF/IFAS Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information, and other services only to individuals and institutions that operate in compliance with applicable federal and state non-discrimination laws and policies. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office. U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A&M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Andra Johnson, Dean for UF/IFAS Extension.