

Bumelia lanuginosa Chittamwood¹

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INTRODUCTION

This native North American deciduous tree grows 40 to 50 feet in height and has an open canopy (Fig. 1). Because there appear to be many forms of the plant in nature from shrubby to tree form, nursery operators could make superior selections. The bark varies considerably from tree to tree making this a potential selection criteria for cultivar development. The leathery, shiny green leaves are smooth on their upperside and a fuzzy, red/brown to gray beneath. They drop in late fall without a show. Small, fragrant white flowers appear from June to July and are followed in fall by large, shiny, blue/black, fleshy fruits which are extremely popular with birds and other wildlife. While the fruits are edible to man, they have been known to produce unpleasant side-effects if eaten in quantity.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Bumelia lanuginosa*

Pronunciation: bew-MEEL-ee-uh

luh-noo-jih-NO-suh

Common name(s): Chittamwood, Gum Bumelia, Gum Elastic Buckthorn

Family: *Sapotaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; reclamation plant; shade tree; specimen; residential street tree

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

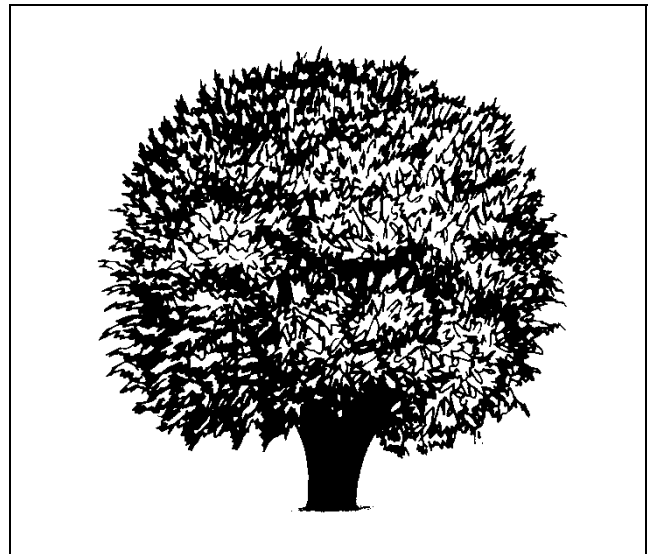


Figure 1. Mature Chittamwood.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 40 to 50 feet

Spread: 25 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: spreading

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: medium

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: oblong; oblanceolate; obovate

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-103, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
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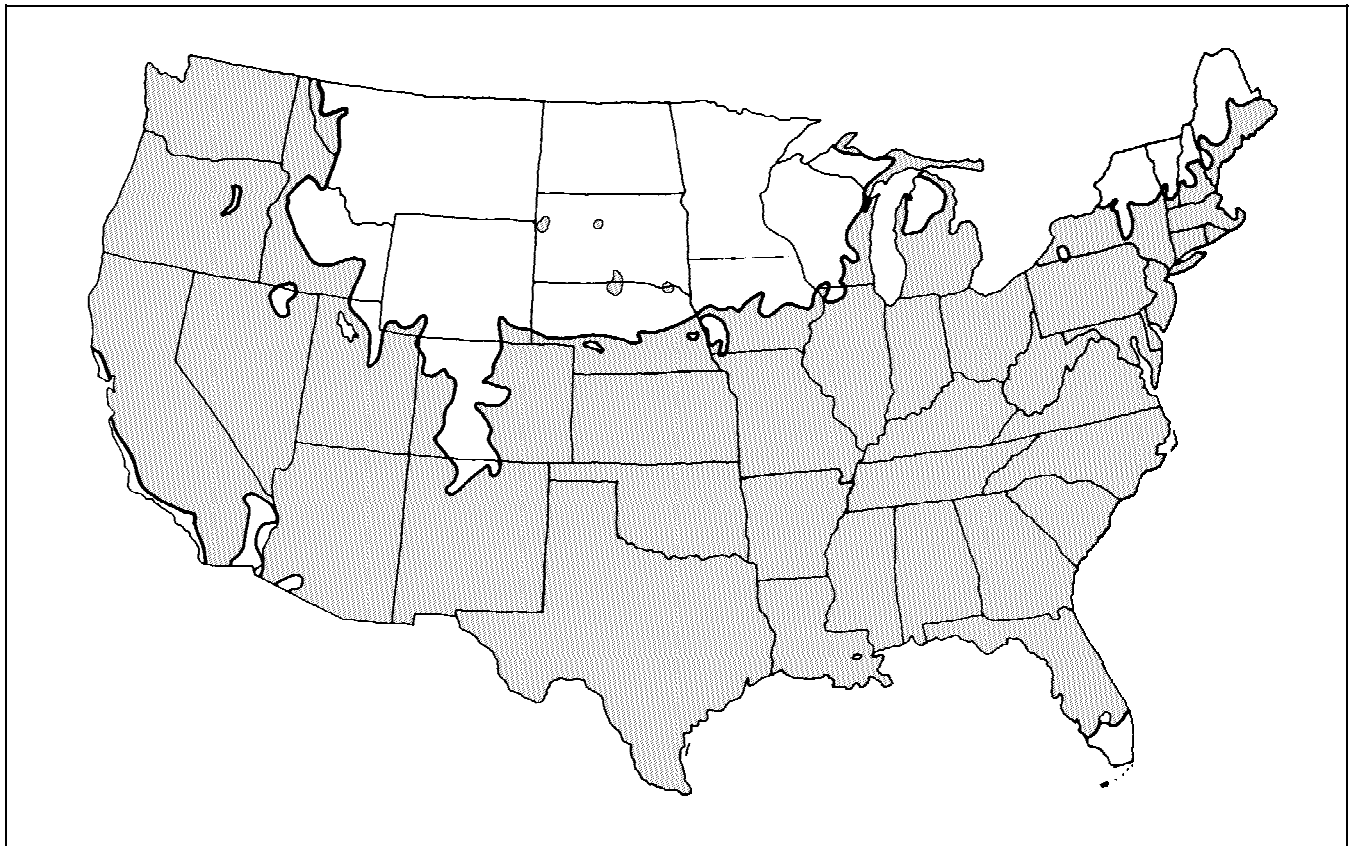


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch; < .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: black; blue

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; thorns are present on the trunk or branches

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown; gray

Current year twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

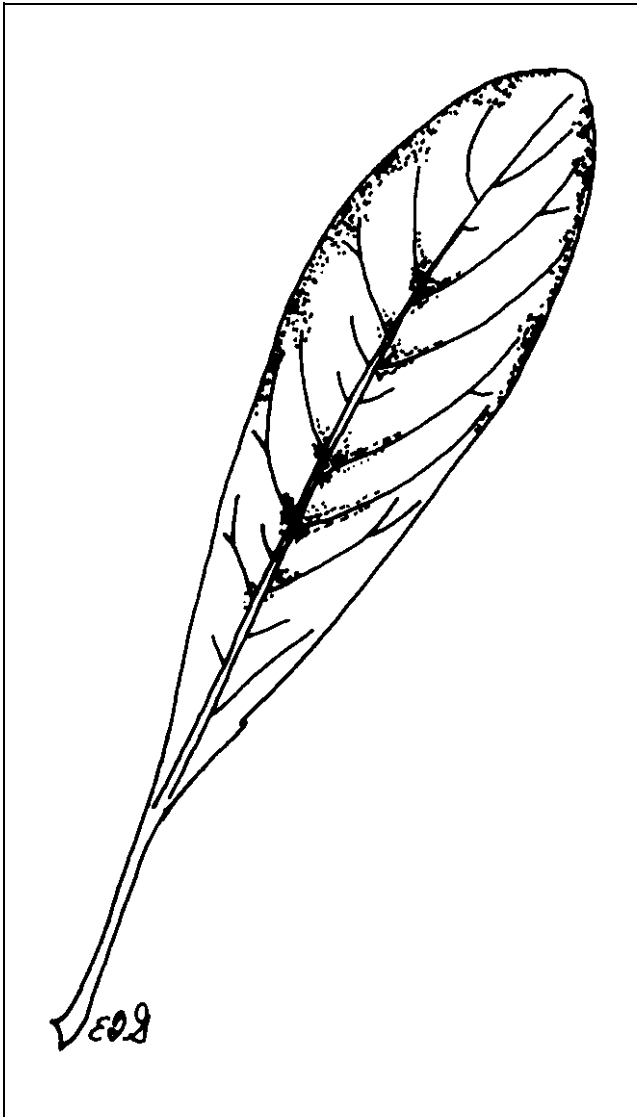


Figure 3. Foliage of Chittamwood.

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Young trees require training to display a tree-like form since a shrubby, rounded ball of foliage often develops without pruning. It is well suited for a reclamation site due to the adaptability to a wide range of soil types. It could be planted in urban and suburban landscapes, especially in areas that receive minimum maintenance.

The common names of Gum Bumelia and Gum-Elastic are derived from the sap which quickly oozes from cuts or cracks to the bark. Youngsters in pioneer days were known to chew this sap as a gum.

Chittamwood should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained soils. Trees found on poor soils in the wild grow slowly and are stunted, but with normal care they will grow well in a variety of landscapes.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

It is pest free.