



Franklinia alatamaha Franklin-Tree¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

This is an excellent small tree native to Georgia, reaching a maximum of 30 feet but it is usually smaller in a sunny landscape (Fig. 1). It is somewhat pyramidal when young becoming more rounded with age with many thin stems and trunks. It is best used as a specimen or in borders, to show off its fragrant, white, camellia-like flowers, three inches across, that bloom from July to late summer when few other trees bloom. The bright green foliage turns a vivid orange-red in the fall while some flowers are still in bloom. Ridged grey bark with prominent vertical white striations adds winter interest. Franklin-Tree typically grows with numerous vertical stems or trunks originating at or near ground level.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Franklinia alatamaha*

Pronunciation: frank-LIN-ee-uh
uh-lah-tah-MAH-hah

Common name(s): Franklin-Tree, Franklinia

Family: *Theaceae*

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

Origin: native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; near a deck or patio; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

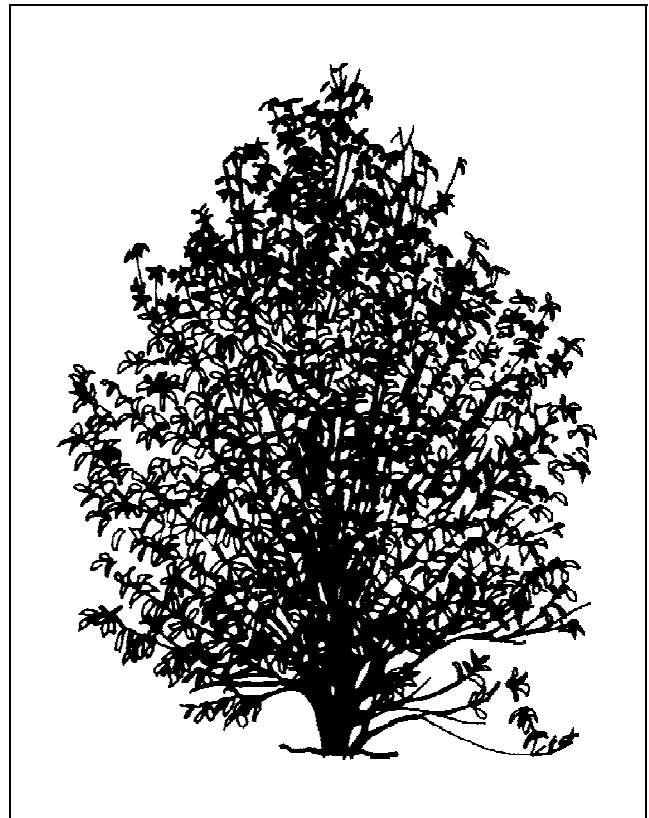


Figure 1. Middle-aged Franklin-Tree.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: round; pyramidal

Crown density: dense

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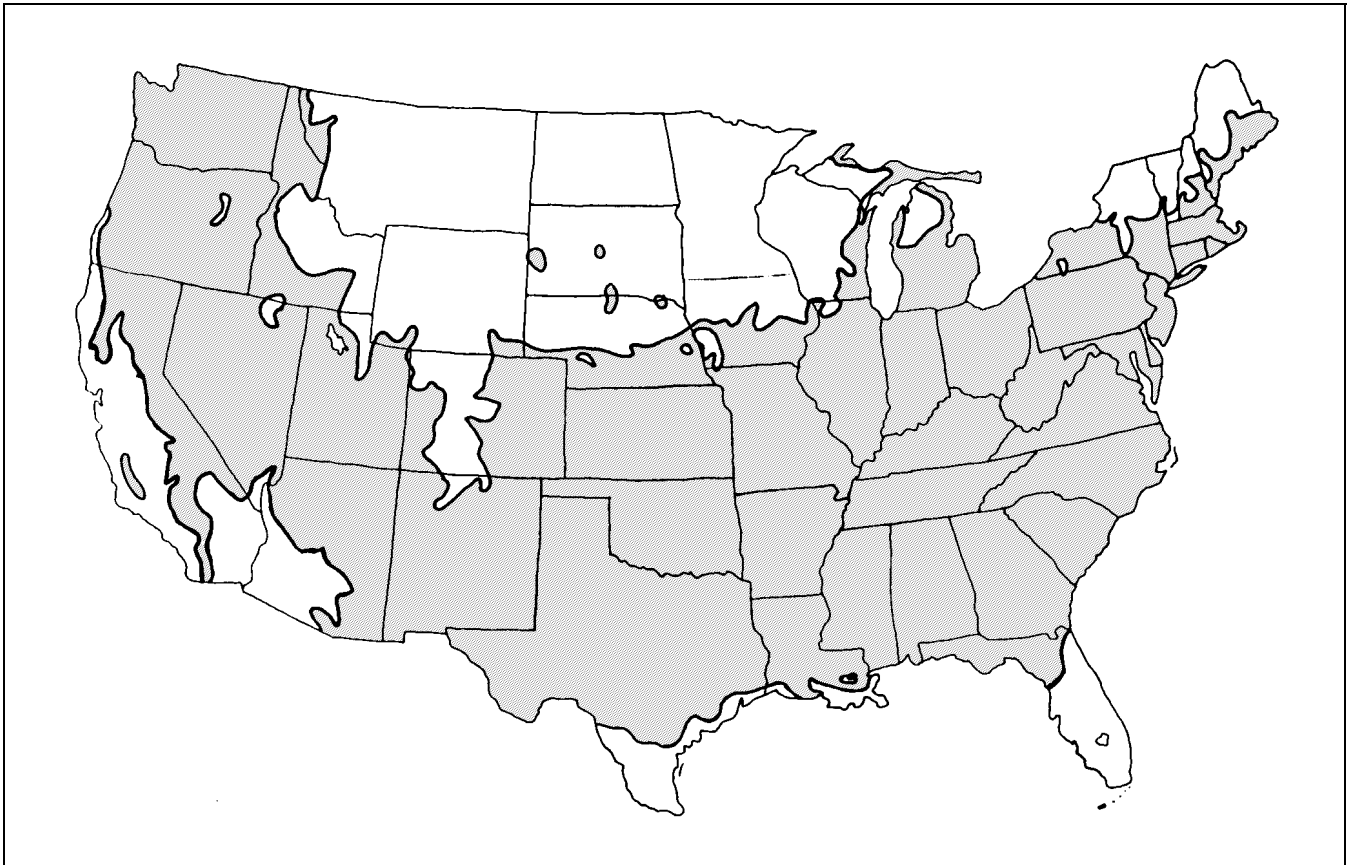


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: oblong; oblanceolate; obovate

Leaf venation: banchidodrome; pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: orange; red

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: fall flowering; pleasant fragrance; summer flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

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; showy trunk; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown; green

Current year twig thickness: medium

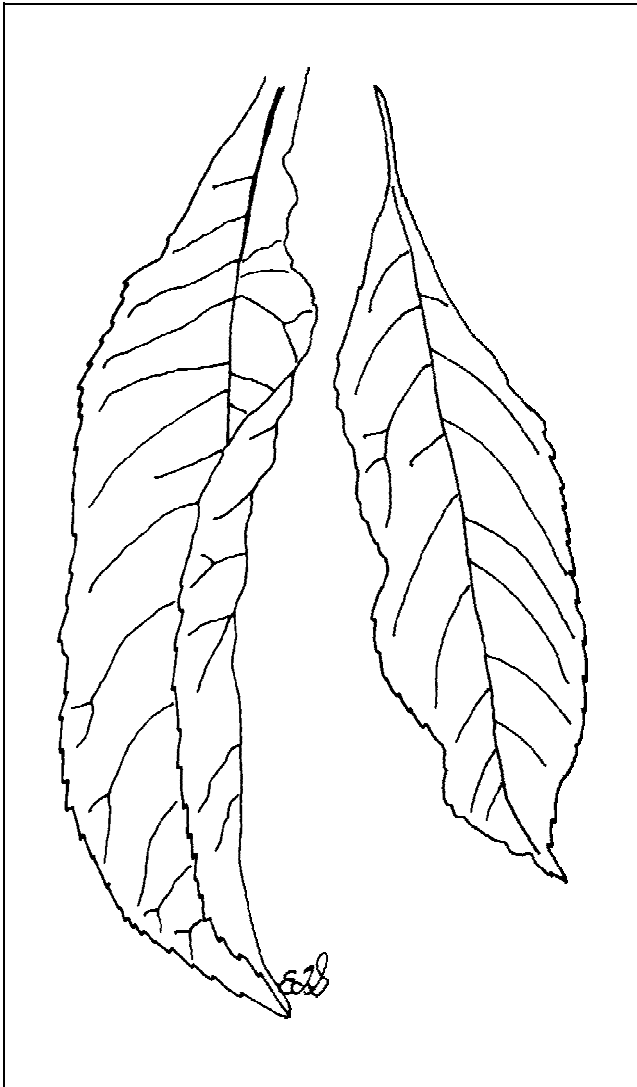


Figure 3. Foliage of Franklin-Tree.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Franklin-Tree does best in well-drained, rich, acid soil, with ample water, and partial sun in the southern part of its range. Drainage must be excellent and the tree does not tolerate clay soil and is only slightly or moderately drought-tolerant. Best to provide a permanent irrigation system for Franklin-Tree.

Pests

It has no known pests.

Diseases

The most serious problem of Franklin-Tree is a root rot disease. The best protection is to plant in a soil where the disease has not been active. The tree has been difficult to establish in some areas, perhaps because of disease problems. But the beauty of this tree makes your extra effort worthwhile.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun;
tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

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

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests