

## *Gordonia lasianthus* 'Variegata' 'Variegata' Loblolly-Bay<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

A native American, usually single-trunked, evergreen tree, this cultivar of Loblolly-Bay reaches a height of 35 to 60 feet with a columnar or pyramidal, very open growth habit (Fig. 1). The two to seven-inch-long, glossy, dark green variegated leaves are a light grey color on the underside, giving a two-toned effect in the wind. Although evergreen, several individual leaves at a time will turn a brilliant scarlet color in the fall adding to its attractiveness. The white, two to three-inch-wide, five-petaled, cup-shaped flowers open from late spring through summer and are very attractive but sparsely produced throughout the canopy.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Gordonia lasianthus* 'Variegata'

**Pronunciation:** gor-DOE-nee-uh lay-zee-ANTH-us

**Common name(s):** 'Variegata' Loblolly-Bay, 'Variegata' Sweet-Bay

**Family:** *Theaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7 through 9 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** espalier; reclamation plant; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

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

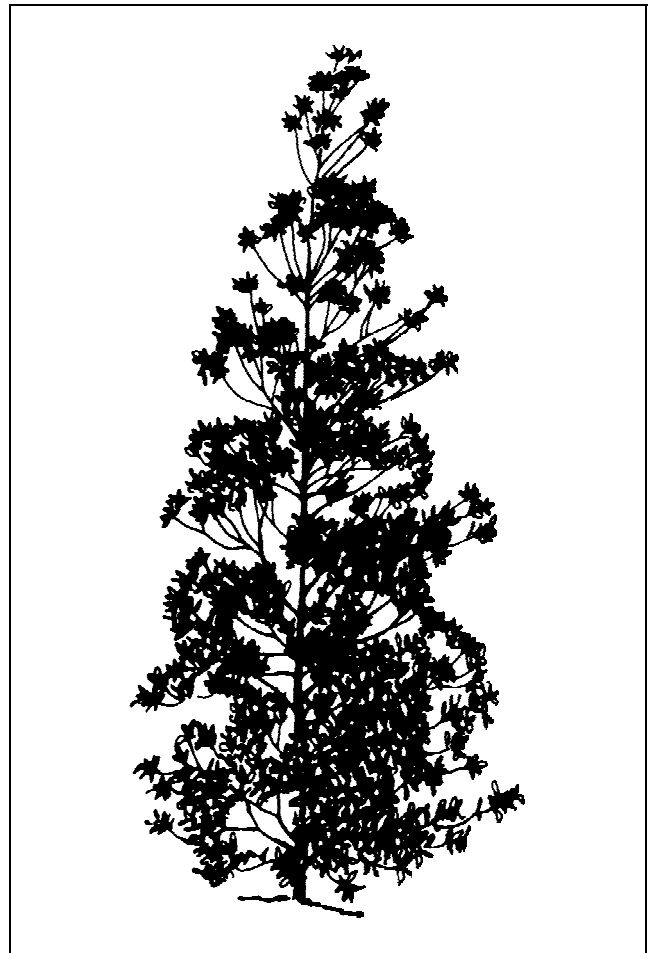


Figure 1. Middle-aged 'Variegata' Loblolly-Bay.

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 35 to 60 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-284, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

**Crown shape:** columnar

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** serrulate

**Leaf shape:** oblong; oblanceolate

**Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate; reticulate

**Leaf type and persistence:** broadleaf evergreen; evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** variegated

**Fall color:** red

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** spring flowering; summer flowering; very showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** brown; green

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

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

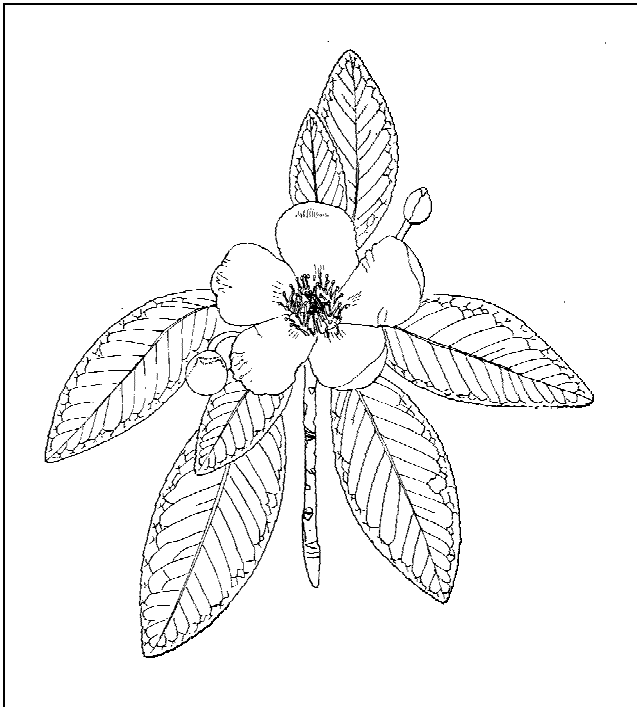


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Variegata' Loblolly-Bay.

Preferring partial shade and moist soil, Loblolly-Bay can tolerate full sun with sufficient moisture. Loblolly-Bay has a shallow root system and will die if not watered during periods of drought. It is found in the wild most often growing in wet sites in the shade of maples, cypress and pines. It is well-suited for planting in boggy and other poorly drained soils. Loblolly-Bay is not salt-tolerant. Not for dry climates.

Propagation is by cuttings.

### Pests

Pest problems are borers in weakened trees, aphids, and caterpillars.

### Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

### Culture

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

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; acidic; extended flooding

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

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

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

**Pest resistance:** no pests are normally seen on the tree

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

Loblolly-Bay makes an attractive specimen planting and its light, airy growth habit lends itself well to smaller, partially enclosed locations. In moist soils, Loblolly-Bay naturalizes well and is well-suited to the low-maintenance landscape. Due to the shape of the crown, it makes a suitable tree in urban areas with restricted, narrow overhead space, and should do well as a street tree, although it has not been extensively used yet.