



## *Prunus caroliniana* 'Bright 'N Tight' 'Bright N Tight' Cherry-Laurel<sup>1</sup>

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

### INTRODUCTION

A dependable, easily-grown, North American native, Cherry-Laurel is densely foliated with glossy, dark green, evergreen leaves and can probably reach 40 feet in height with a 25-foot-spread though is often seen smaller when grown in the open (Fig. 1). Cherry-Laurel will create a very dense screen or hedge with regular pruning but is also attractive when allowed to grow naturally into its upright oval, dense form. This cultivar is more compact and denser than the species. Properly trained to a central leader, the plant could make a good small to medium-sized street tree. The tree usually maintains a good central leader and small-diameter, strong lateral branches following one or two proper prunings before the tree is 8 to 10-years-old. The species was widely planted in Texas until the severe drought of the early 1950's weakened them. Many of these weakened trees eventually died from borers.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Prunus caroliniana* 'Bright 'N Tight'

**Pronunciation:** PROO-nus kair-oh-lin-ee-AY-nuh

**Common name(s):** 'Bright N Tight' Cherry-Laurel, 'Bright N Tight' Carolina Laurelcherry

**Family:** *Rosaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8 through 10A (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; hedge; wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the

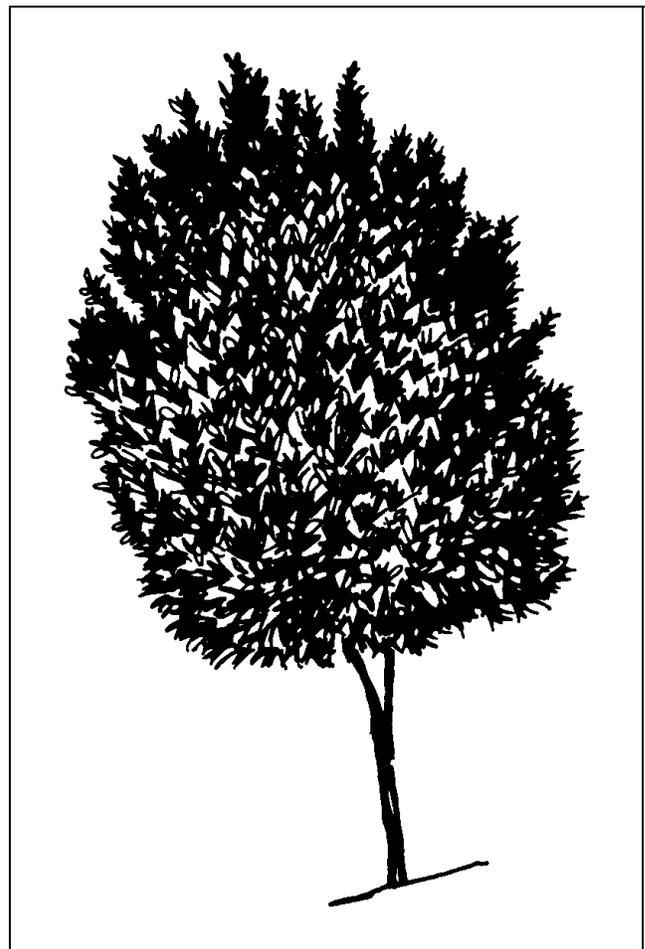


Figure 1. Middle-aged 'Bright N Tight' Cherry-Laurel.

highway; near a deck or patio; reclamation plant; screen; trainable as a standard; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas

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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.

where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

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

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 25 to 35 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 25 feet

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

**Crown shape:** oval; round

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

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

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire; serrulate

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); lanceolate; oblong

**Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate

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

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** pleasant fragrance; showy; spring flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** black

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter

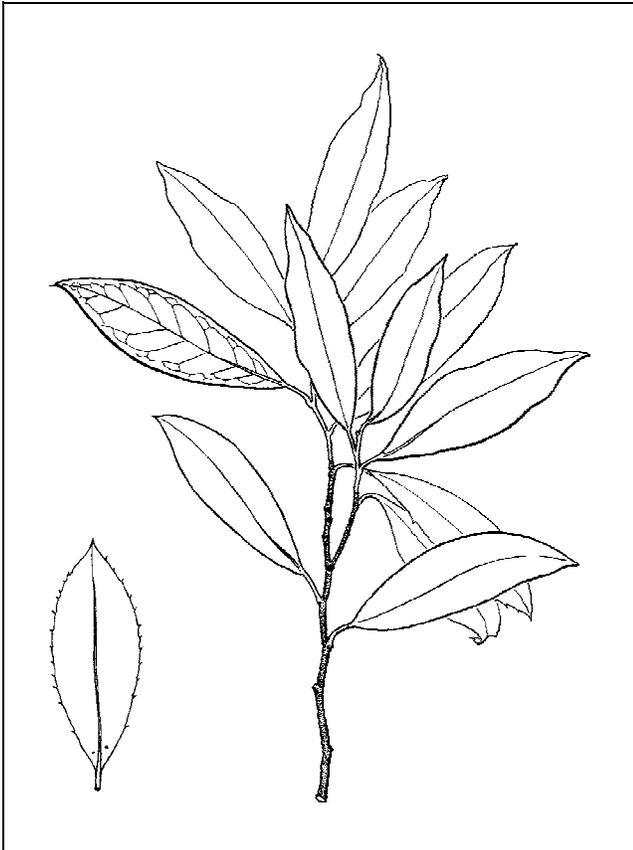


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Bright N Tight' Cherry-Laurel.

### 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:** thin

### Culture

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

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

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

### Other

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

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** seeds itself into the landscape

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible

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

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

In springtime, tiny, creamy-white showy flowers appear in dense, fragrant clusters and are followed by small, shiny, black cherries which are quite attractive to wildlife. The flowers attract lots of bees. The great quantity of fruit may create a litter problem if the trees are located near a patio or walkway but the fruit is small and washes away quickly. The quick growth and ease of maintenance makes Cherry-Laurel ideal for naturalizing and for low maintenance gardens except that hundreds of seedlings can be found beneath the crown each year from germinating seeds. Of course, this would not be a problem in a street tree planting or in an area such as a lawn or highway median which is mowed regularly. Though the crushed leaves and green twigs of Cherry-Laurel give off a delicious maraschino cherry fragrance, they are quite bitter and possibly poisonous. Root systems are often quite shallow but usually they are not aggressive and do not cause problems.

Preferring ample moisture while young, Cherry-Laurel is otherwise well-suited to sun or shade locations on any average, well-drained soil. Once established, it is salt-and drought-tolerant requiring little or no irrigation. Over-irrigating can cause chlorosis and decline. Do not plant in wet, soggy areas. The tree adapts well to soils with high pH. Clay soil is fine as long as water doesn't stand after it rains.

The cultivar 'Compacta' has a very dense, compact habit of growth, to about 20 feet tall.

Propagation is by cuttings.

### Pests

This tree's pests include mites, borers, and caterpillars. Borers are troublesome on stressed trees as there are on many other stressed trees.

### Diseases

Leaf spot, fire-blight, and stem canker are diseases of this tree. It is difficult to grow in containers due to root rot and over-irrigation.