

## *Chrysophyllum oliviforme* Satinleaf<sup>1</sup>

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

### INTRODUCTION

Reaching a height of 40 feet and a spread of 20 feet in an oval form, Satinleaf is a medium-sized tree noted for its unusually beautiful foliage (Fig. 1). The evergreen, four-inch-long leaves are a glossy, dark green above and a glowing, bright copper color beneath, providing a beautiful, two-toned effect when breezes cause the leaves to flutter. Leaves in some respects resemble those of the brown-back Southern Magnolias. This Florida native makes an attractive freestanding lawn specimen or blends well in a shrubby border or naturalized landscape. It could be tried as a street tree or parking lot tree. Use it cautiously since it can be severely damaged at 32-degrees F. and below. The trunks are rather showy because they are covered with thin, light reddish-brown, scaly bark. Small, inconspicuous flowers are followed by small, sweet, purple fruits.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Chrysophyllum oliviforme*

**Pronunciation:** kriss-so-FILL-um  
awl-liv-ih-FOR-mee

**Common name(s):** Satinleaf

**Family:** *Sapotaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); near a deck or patio; screen; shade tree; specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree

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

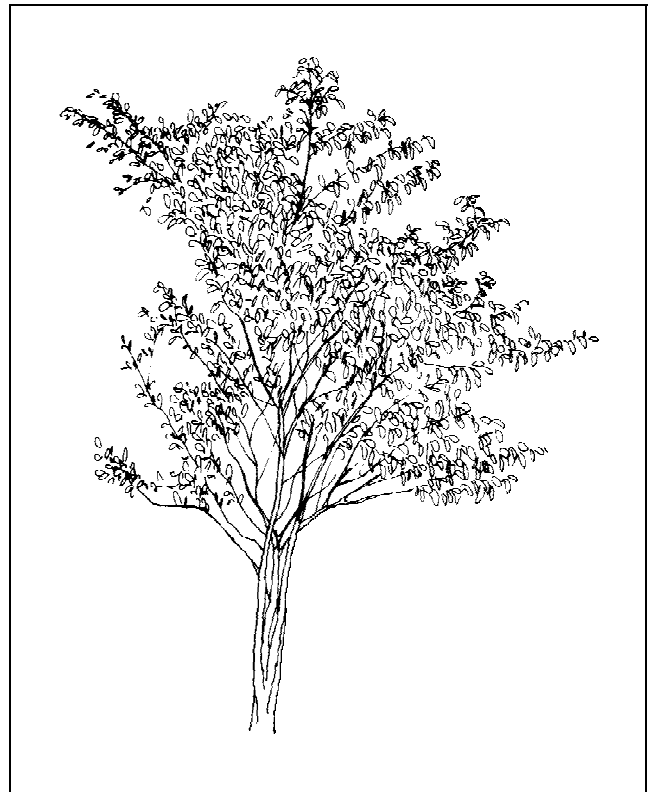


Figure 1. Young Satinleaf.

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 35 to 45 feet

**Spread:** 18 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

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-166, 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 density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

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

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

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

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

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not  
showy; year round flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** elongated

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** purple

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

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily  
damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree  
grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or  
pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; showy trunk;  
should be grown with a single leader; no thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop  
strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

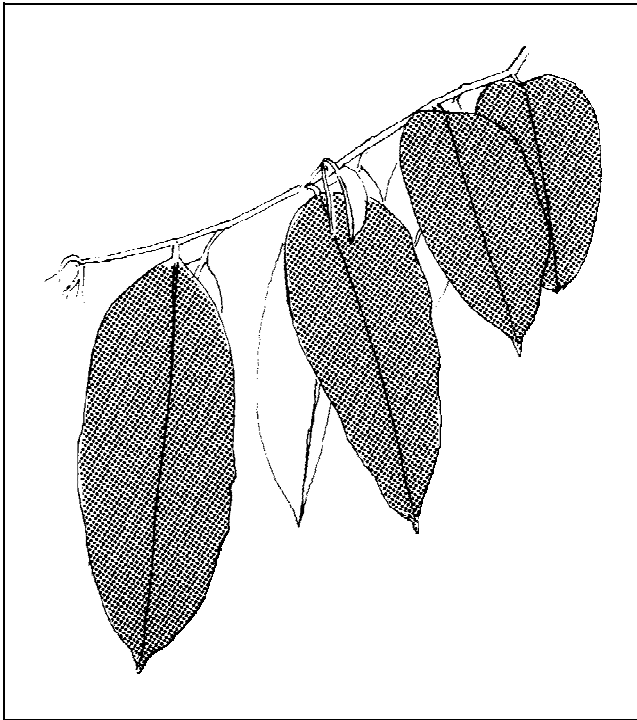


Figure 3. Foliage of Satinleaf.

Star-apple, *Chrysophyllum cainito*, closely related, bears leaves of similar decorative quality and is grown for its larger (up to four inches long), more edible fruits.

Propagation is by seed, or semi-hardwood cuttings under mist.

### **Pests and Diseases**

Caterpillars will occasionally chew the leaves, gall mite can deform leaves, and leaf notcher chews leaves.

### **Culture**

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

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic;  
occasionally wet; alkaline; 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:** 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

## **USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Satinleaf should be grown in full sun or partial shade on fertile, well-drained soils. Plants should be mulched and watered faithfully, although they are able to withstand occasional drought. The tree has not been widely planted but should make a good, durable urban tree in USDA hardiness zones 10b and 11. Trunk and branch structure is good, making this a clean, long-lasting tree.