



# *Bumelia lanuginosa* Chittamwood<sup>1</sup>

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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

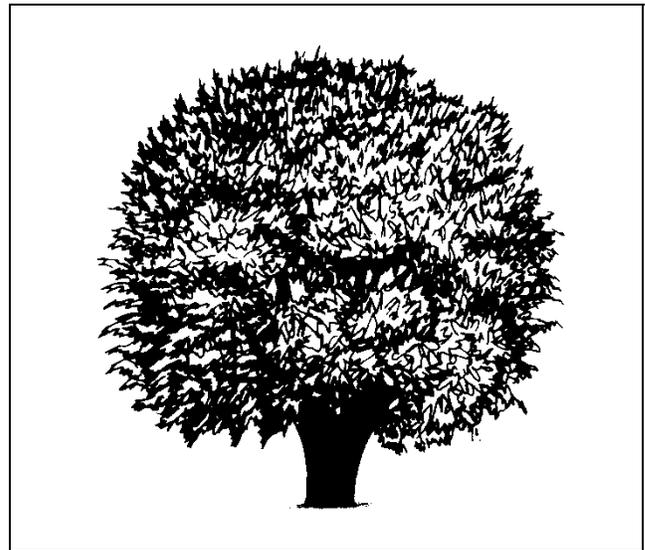


Figure 1. Mature Chittamwood.

## 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

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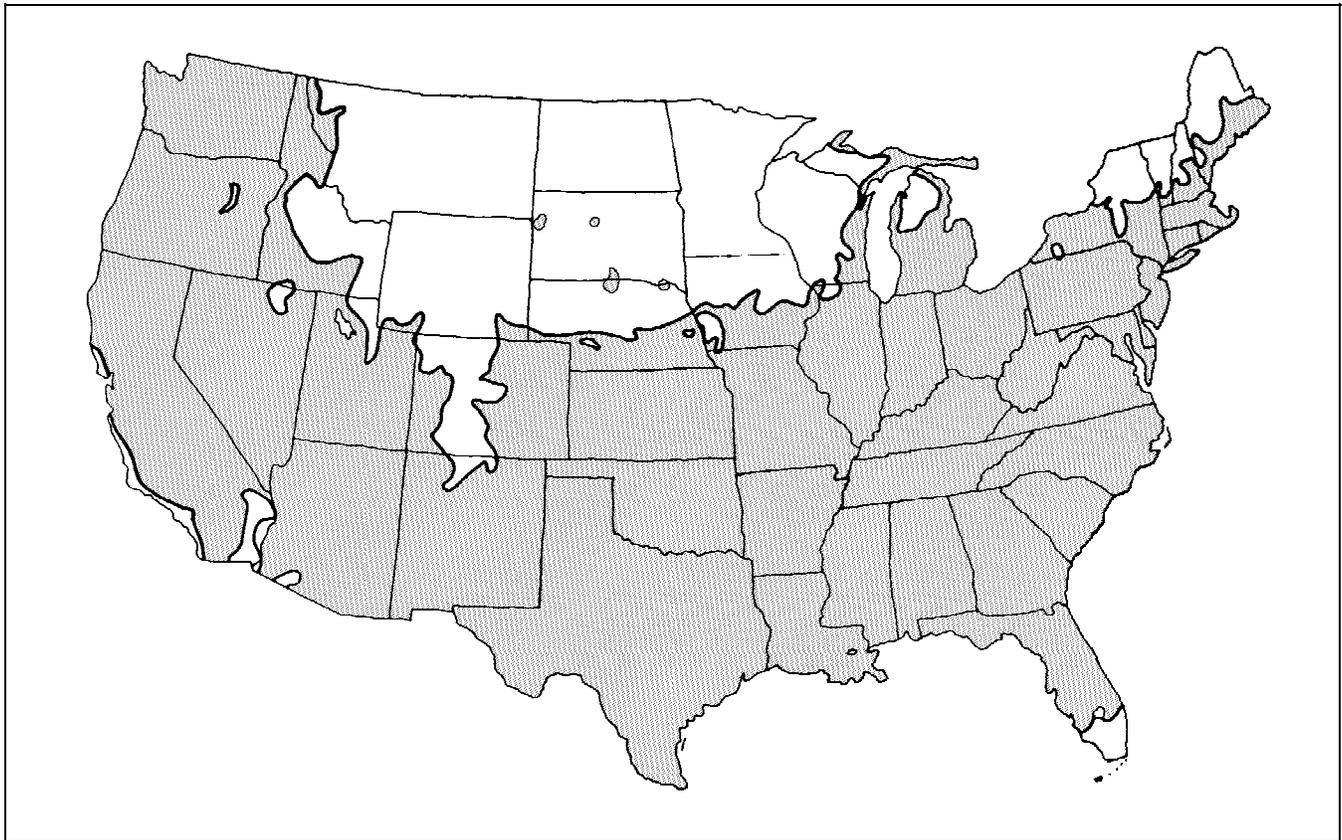


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**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.