



Halesia carolina Carolina Silverbell¹

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INTRODUCTION

A North American native tree, Carolina Silverbell grows into a 20 to 40-foot-tall tree with a 15 to 30-foot-spread and a pyramidal silhouette (Fig. 1). Some horticulturists do not separate this from *Halesia monticola*. The two to four-inch-long leaves turn yellow in fall and are among the first to drop in autumn. The tree prefers sandy loam and begins blooming when only 10 to 12 feet tall. The white, bell-shaped, showy blossoms are borne in two to five-inch-long clusters. Flowering occurs along last year's branches in mid-May. Because the flowers point downward, they are partially hidden by the foliage and best viewed from below. Other ornamental features are the yellow fall color and the bark, which peels off in large, flat scales. The pale yellow fruits are quite attractive as they hang down from last year's branches. Carolina Silverbell may transplant poorly in the fall.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Halesia carolina*

Pronunciation: hal-EE-zhee-uh kair-oh-LYE-nuh

Common name(s): Carolina Silverbell

Family: *Styracaceae*

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

Origin: native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); near a deck or patio; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

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

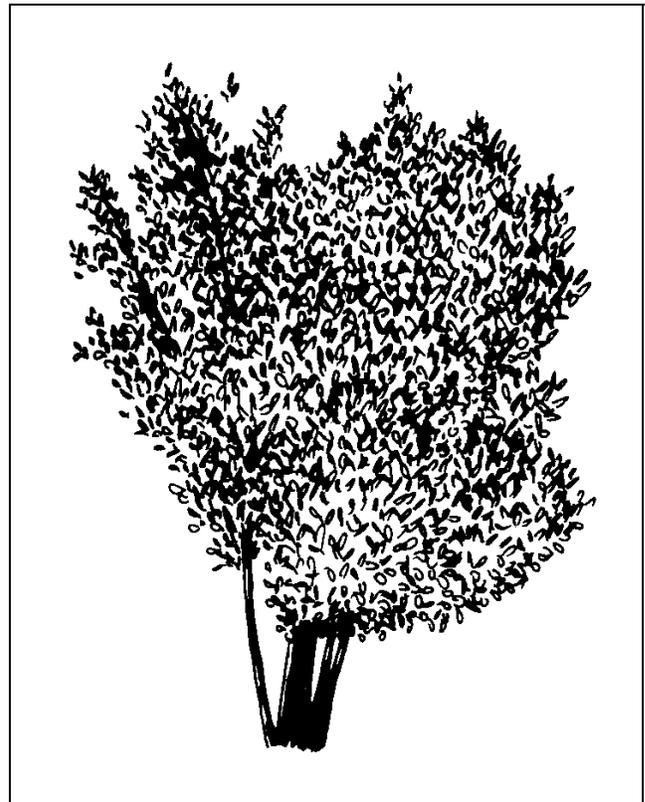


Figure 1. Middle-aged Carolina Silverbell.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 40 to 60 feet

Spread: 15 to 30 feet

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

Crown shape: round; upright; vase shape

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: medium

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrulate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); oblong; ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: spring flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: green; yellow

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

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

Current year twig thickness: thin

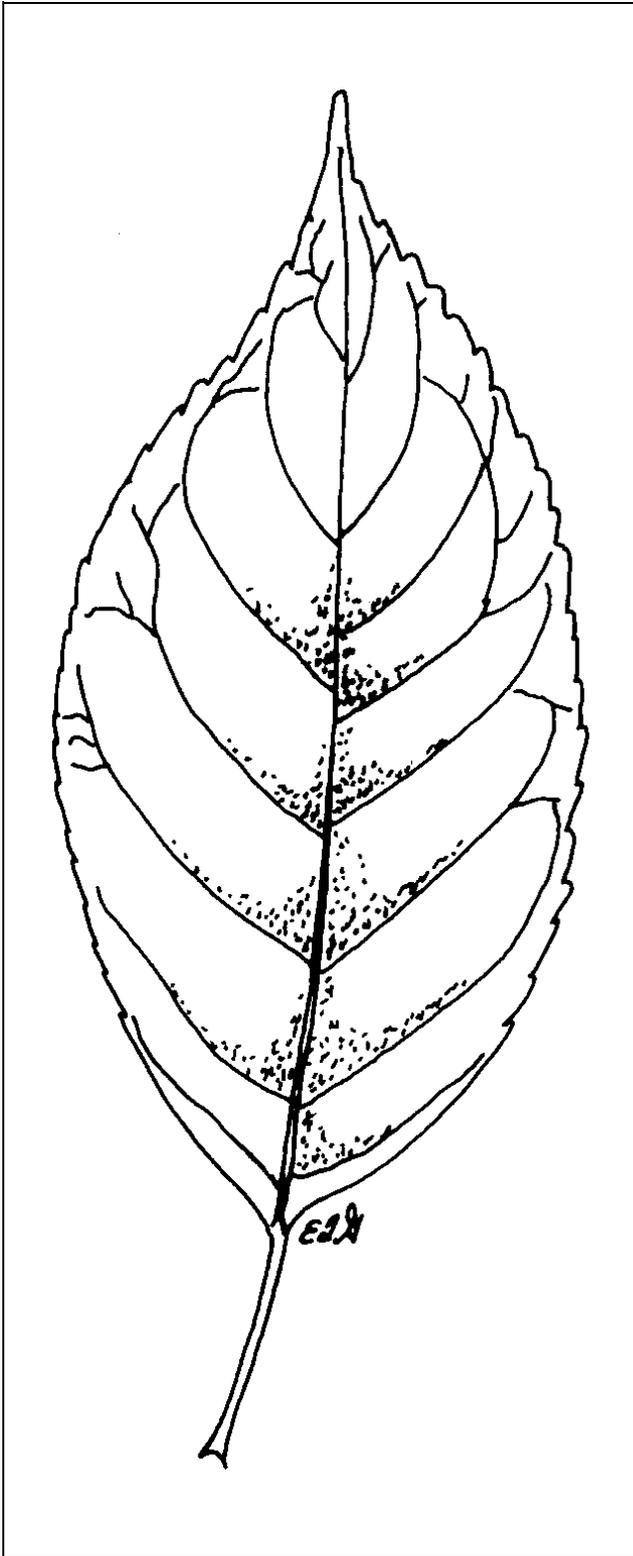


Figure 3. Foliage of Carolina Silverbell.

Culture

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

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: low

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: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

This tree is interesting all year long, with attractive medium green foliage, pretty flowers, showy fruits, and exfoliating bark. It branches low to the ground, making a nice lawn or specimen tree and when pruned to one central leader can be used as a street tree in residential areas. The bark shows off nicely with foliage removed from the lower branches, and multistemmed specimens come-to-life when lit from below at nighttime. It is a splendid small tree to locate near a patio or deck.

An understory tree best suited for a partially shaded or shaded location, Silverbell prefers moist, fertile soil with an accumulation of leaf litter and/or mulch. Water the tree during a drought and avoid compacted soil.

Propagation is by seeds sown as soon as ripe or stratified, and by layering, root cuttings, and greenwood cuttings. Small trees and seedlings transplant easily.

One cultivar is listed: 'Rosea', with pale pink flowers.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.