



# *Styrax japonicus* Japanese Snowbell<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

Japanese Snowbell is a small deciduous tree that slowly grows from 20 to 30 feet in height and has rounded canopy with a horizontal branching pattern (Fig. 1). With lower branches removed, it forms a more vase-shaped patio-sized shade tree. The smooth, attractive bark has orange-brown interlacing fissures adding winter interest to any landscape. The white, bell-shaped, drooping flower clusters of Japanese Snowbell are quite showy in May to June.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Styrax japonicus*

**Pronunciation:** STY-racks juh-PAWN-ih-kuss

**Common name(s):** Japanese Snowbell

**Family:** *Styracaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 6 through 8A (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; trainable as a standard; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

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

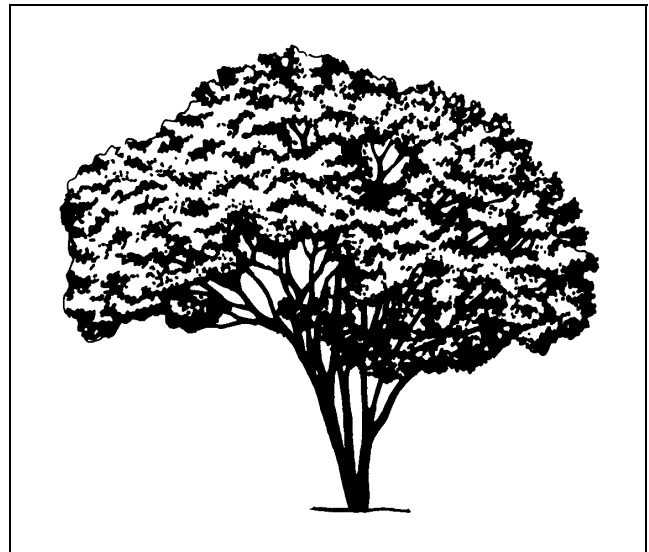


Figure 1. Middle-aged Japanese Snowbell.

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 20 to 30 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:** round; vase shape

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

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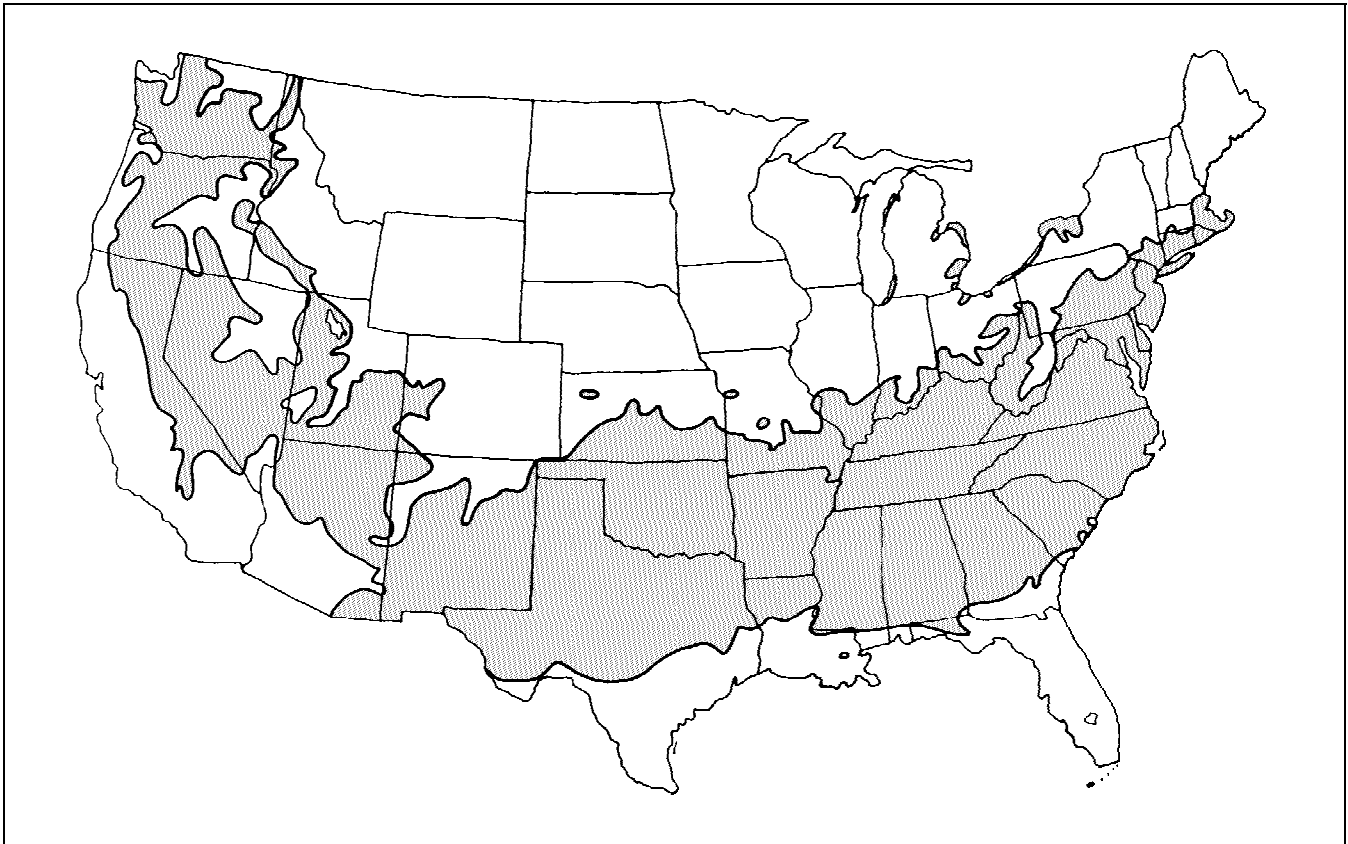


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Foliage**

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** entire; serrate; sinuate
- Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); oblong
- Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate
- Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous
- Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** red; yellow
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

- Flower color:** white
- Flower characteristics:** showy; spring flowering; summer flowering

**Fruit**

- Fruit shape:** oval; round
- Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch; < .5 inch
- Fruit covering:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** green

- Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; 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; showy trunk; no thorns
- Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
- Breakage:** resistant
- Current year twig color:** green
- Current year twig thickness:** thin

**Culture**

- Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
- Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
- Drought tolerance:** moderate
- Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate
- Soil salt tolerance:** poor

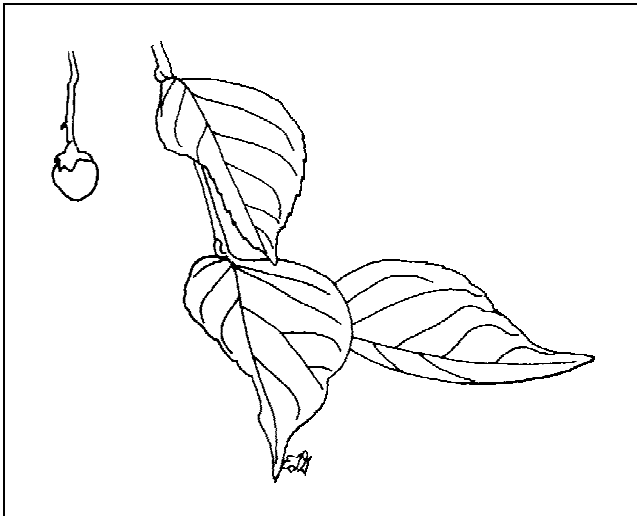


Figure 3. Foliage of Japanese Snowbell.

'Crystal' - upright to fastigate habit, black green foliage, crisp white flowers with purple pedicels (zone 5); 'Issai' - cold hardy to zone 6, grows faster than species and roots easily; 'Pink Chimes' - pink flowers, cold hardy to zone 6.

Propagate by softwood cuttings in summer. Seeds eventually germinate but exhibit a double dormancy.

### Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases of major concern. Ambrosia beetle can attack and lead to further decline of stressed plants.

### 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

*Styrax* species is an excellent small patio tree where the flowers and interesting bark can be viewed up close; however, the flowers attract tremendous numbers of bees and one should be cautious about approaching the plant at that time. Japanese Snowbell also makes a wonderful addition to the mixed shrubby border. Due to its small stature and vase-shape, it can make a nice street tree where overhead space is limited. The fruit is somewhat showy and may cause a small litter problem for a short time in the fall. Fall leaf color is unreliable.

Snowbell prefers a peaty, acid soil that is moist but not waterlogged. In colder areas (USDA hardiness zone 5), locate this tree in an area protected from winter winds. Plants grow better with a couple hours of shade in USDA hardiness zones 7 and 8 but full sun is fine in the North.

Cultivars include: 'Carillon' is hardy only to zone 6, grows about one-foot per year and has a weeping habit, can be staked to encourage weeping habit;