



## *Styrax obassia* Fragrant Snowbell<sup>1</sup>

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

### INTRODUCTION

*Styrax obassia* gets its common name, Fragrant Snowbell, from the six to eight-inch-long raceme of fragrant, white, bell-shaped flowers produced May to June (Fig. 1). Fragrant Snowbell is a small, 20 to 30-foot tall, deciduous tree that is appropriate as a patio tree where the attractive bark with orange-brown vertical fissures can be appreciated at a close distance, or Fragrant Snowbell can add color to the mixed shrubbery border. The dark green leaves are not as attractive as Japanese snowbell since they are quite large (three to eight-inches-long) and somewhat hide the beauty of the flowers. For this reason alone, Japanese Snowbell is preferred between the two species. Fragrant Snowbell does not have good fall color and the fruit is insignificant.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Styrax obassia*

**Pronunciation:** STY-racks oh-BAY-see-uh

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

**Family:** *Styracaceae*

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** near a deck or patio; reclamation plant; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

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

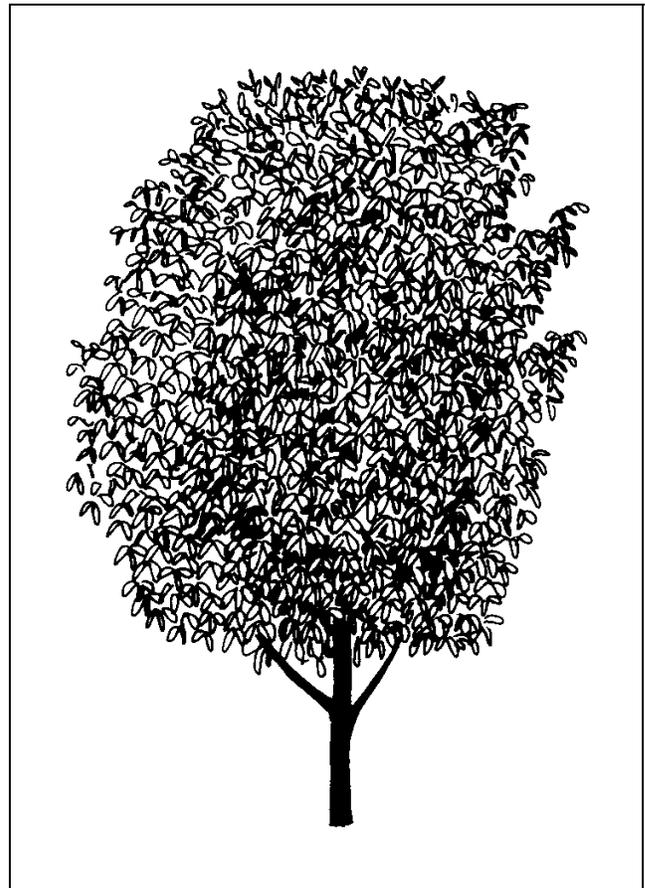


Figure 1. Middle-aged Fragrant Snowbell.

### 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

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-607, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.
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.

or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** oval; upright; vase shape

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** coarse

**Foliage**

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

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** dentate; entire; serrate

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

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

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** yellow

**Fall characteristic:** showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white

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

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** oval; round

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

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** green

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; 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; green; reddish

**Current year twig thickness:** thick

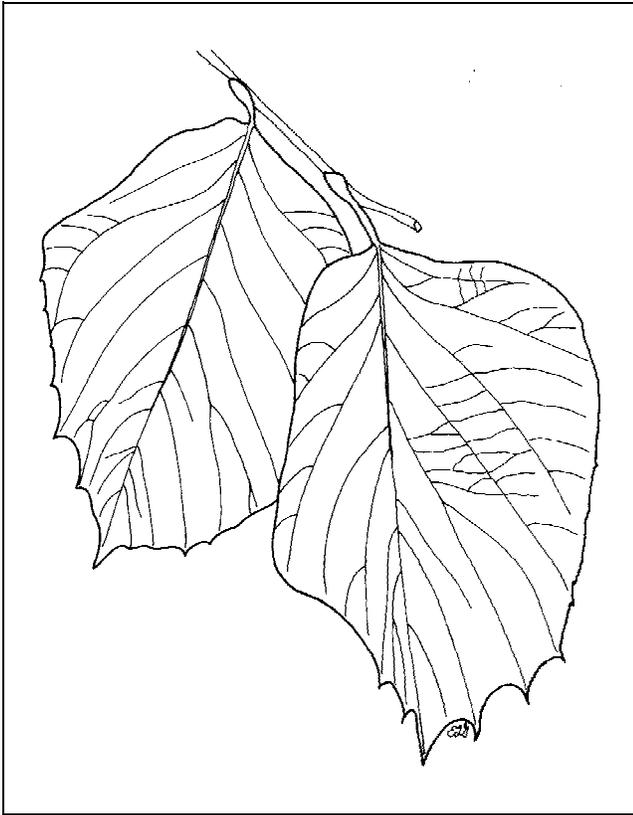


Figure 3. Foliage of Fragrant Snowbell.

southern part of its range. Propagate by softwood cuttings in summer.

### **Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases of major concern.

### **Culture**

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

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

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

### **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 obassia* requires a well-drained, peaty, acid soil. It often grows poorly in clay or compacted soil. In colder areas (USDA hardiness zone 6), locate *Styrax obassia* in an area protected from winter winds. Some protection from full day sun is preferable in the