



Styrax obassia Fragrant Snowbell¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

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

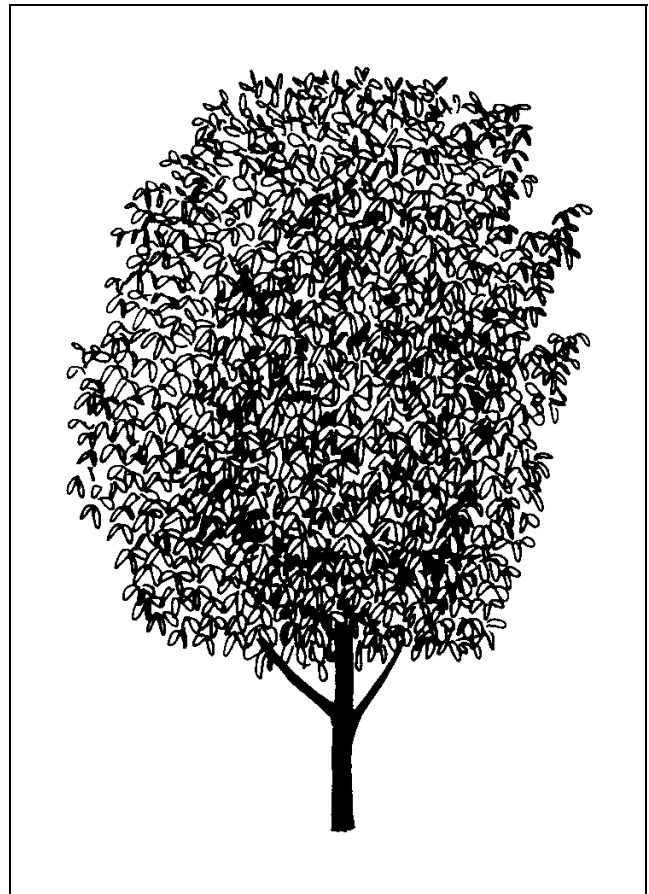


Figure 1. Middle-aged Fragrant Snowbell.

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

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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.

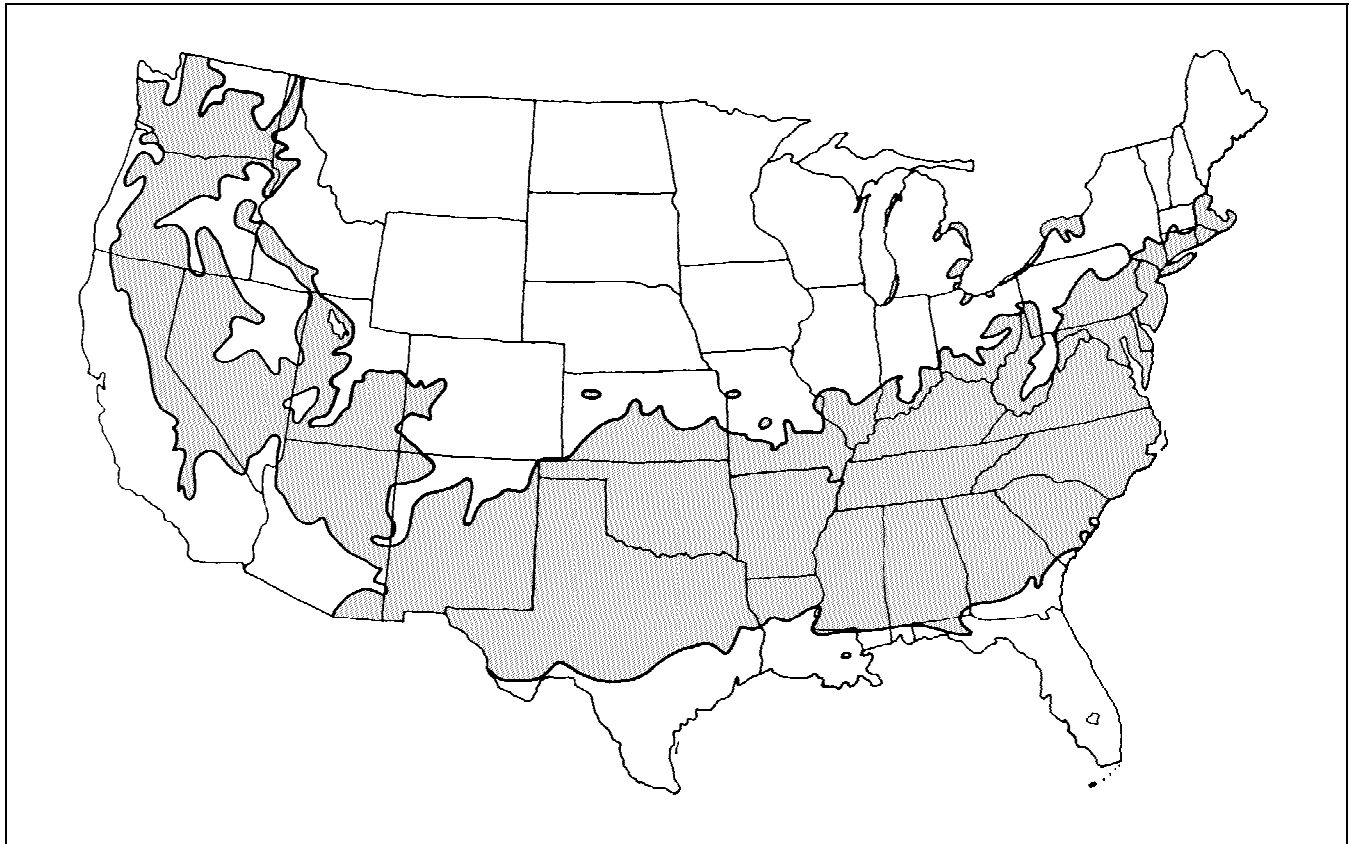


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

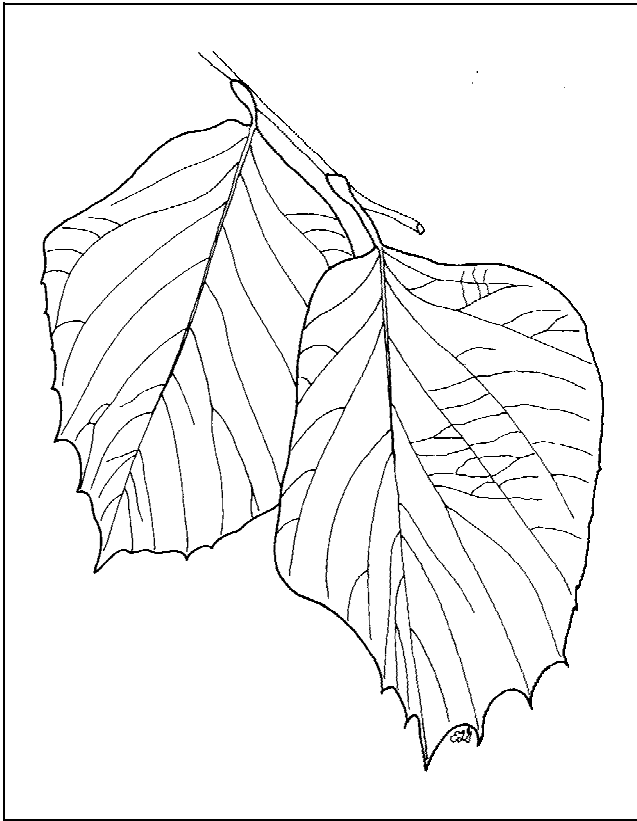


Figure 3. Foliage of Fragrant Snowbell.

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