

Bumelia lanuginosa: Chittamwood¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

Introduction

This native North American deciduous tree grows 40 to 50 feet in height and has an open canopy. 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: 5A through 9B (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: reclamation; specimen; shade; highway median; street without sidewalk

Availability: not native to North America

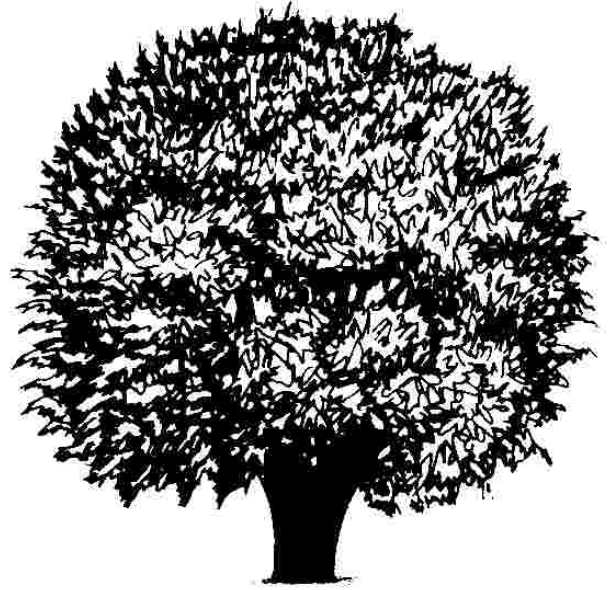


Figure 1. Mature *Bumelia lanuginosa*: Chittamwood

Description

Height: 40 to 50 feet

Spread: 25 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: spreading

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

1. This document is ENH262, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed May 2011. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Range

Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: oblanceolate, oblong, obovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches, 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray
Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: less than .5 inch, .5 to 1 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: blue, black
Fruit characteristics: attracts squirrels/mammals; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: gray, brown
Current year twig thickness: thin
Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; alkaline; occasionally wet; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no
Outstanding tree: no
Ozone sensitivity: unknown
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown
Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases



Figure 3. Foliage

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.