**Halesia diptera: Two-Winged Silverbell**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

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**Introduction**

Two-Winged Silverbell is a wonderful, small, deciduous native tree, reaching 20 to 30 feet in height, with a fairly dense, rounded silhouette when grown in the full sun. In its native habitat as an understory tree along stream banks it appears more open. Branches grow from the base of the tree forming a multi-trunked tree suited for specimen or patio planting. Although native to the deep south, it is, unfortunately, known little and not grown by many nurseries. In springtime, the trees produce a multitude of beautiful, showy, bell-shaped white flowers which are followed by two-winged, 1.5 to 2-inch-long drupes.

**General Information**

- **Scientific name:** *Halesia diptera*
- **Pronunciation:** hal-EE-zhee-uh DIP-ter-uh
- **Common name(s):** Two-Winged Silverbell, Snowdrop Tree
- **Family:** Styracaceae
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 5A through 8B (Fig. 2)
- **Origin:** native to North America
- **Invasive potential:** little invasive potential
- **Uses:** sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; specimen; deck or patio; container or planter
- **Availability:** not native to North America

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**Description**

**Height:** 20 to 30 feet  
**Spread:** 20 to 30 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular  
**Crown shape:** round, vase  
**Crown density:** moderate  
**Growth rate:** moderate  
**Texture:** medium  

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** serrate  
**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval), obovate  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy  

**Figure 3. Foliage**

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white/cream/gray  
**Flower characteristics:** very showy  

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** oval  
**Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches  
**Fruit covering:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** yellow  
**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem  

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure  
**Breakage:** resistant  
**Current year twig color:** brown  
**Current year twig thickness:** thin  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

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**Culture**

**Light requirement:** partial sun or partial shade, shade tolerant, full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; acidic; slightly alkaline; well-drained; occasionally wet  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** unknown

**Other**

**Roots:** not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no  
**Outstanding tree:** yes  
**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown  
**Pest resistance:** free of serious pests and diseases

**Use and Management**

Two-Winged Silverbell is slowly gaining in popularity for landscape use, and is ideal for naturalizing in locations with moist soil. It is not drought-tolerant and should always be located in a protected spot sheltered from full day sun and wind. Grows best with mulch beneath the entire canopy. It makes a nice addition to the shaded shrub border with its spring flower display and creates an excellent understory tree beneath large natives. Use it as you would Flowering Dogwood. Also used as a patio tree for creating shade in a small, residential landscape. Not a tree for planting in the open or along a street.

Two-Winged Silverbell should be located in partial shade on very well-drained acid soil where leaf litter and mulch are allowed to accumulate. It grows in full sun in the north, adapts to almost total shade. It is not adapted to clay.

Variety *magniflora* has larger flowers and is a vigorous grower in the South.

Propagation is by seed.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern. It is amazingly pest free.