

## *Ligustrum lucidum*: Glossy Privet<sup>1</sup>

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

### Introduction

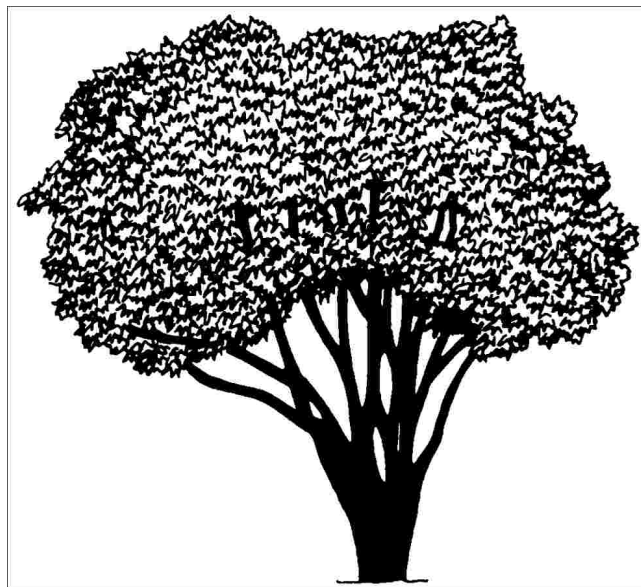
This fast-growing evergreen tree, 25 to 40 feet in height (can grow larger) with a 25 to 35 foot spread, has a dense canopy of bending branches composed of large, four to six-inch-long, glossy green leaves which have narrow, translucent margins. Terminal, 6 to 10-inch-long, eye-catching panicles of small, white, malodorous flowers are produced in late spring in the south and summer in the north. These blooms are followed in fall by large, showy clusters of small purple berries. The berries are popular with birds and the dispersed seeds germinate in the landscape and could become somewhat of a nuisance. Care must be taken in the location of this multitrunked tree since the profuse berry production can create a litter problem on hard surfaces. The fallen berries may stain car paint, walks, and patios.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Ligustrum lucidum*

**Pronunciation:** lih-GUS-trum LOO-sih-dum

**Common name(s):** Glossy Privet, Tree Ligustrum



**Figure 1.** Mature *Ligustrum lucidum*: Glossy Privet

**Family:** *Oleaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8A through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** According to the IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas (Fox *et al.* 2005), *Ligustrum lucidum* (glossy privet) may be used with caution in

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Florida, but should be managed to prevent its escape (counties are listed by zone at: <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment> ).

**Uses:** urban tolerant; deck or patio; street without sidewalk; screen; specimen; container or planter; trained as a standard; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median; shade

**Availability:** not native to North America

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate, lanceolate



Figure 2. Range

### Description

**Height:** 25 to 40 feet

**Spread:** 25 to 35 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical

**Crown shape:** round, vase

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen, broadleaf evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white/cream/gray

**Flower characteristics:** showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval, round

**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** purple, blue

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves 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:** green, gray

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

### Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun or partial shade

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

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

### Other

**Roots:** not a problem

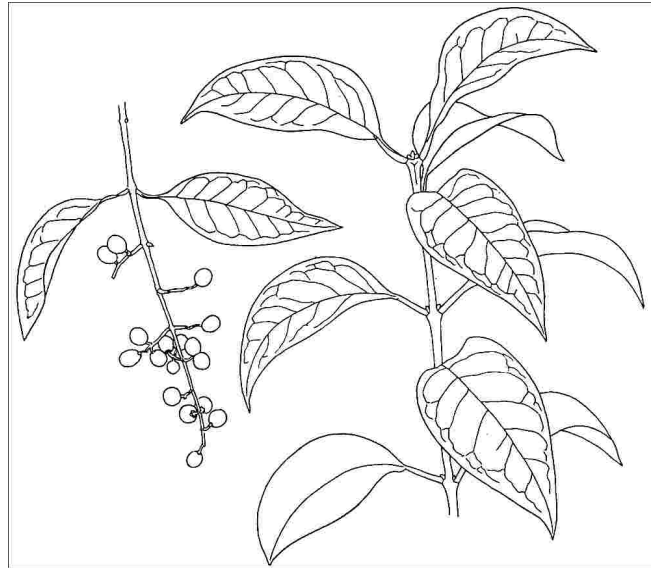
**Winter interest:** yes

**Outstanding tree:** no

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible

**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases



**Figure 3.** Foliage

## Use and Management

When growing on to a tree sized plant, be sure not to purchase those which were trained as a standard. These often have all branches originating from the same spot on the trunk, and are not well formed for longevity in the landscape. Trees trained as standards are high-maintenance plants since they should be kept in this form and size for their entire life. Most nurseries grow Tree Ligustrum with several trunks originating close to the ground. They spread out from each other as they ascend into the rounded, vase-shaped canopy. These can be planted as street trees if lower branches are periodically removed when the tree is young.

Showing quick growth while young but slowing with age, Tree Ligustrum will grow in full sun or partial shade on various soil types, and is moderately salt-tolerant. The tree seems to thrive on neglect and is used along highways (unirrigated) as a screen for headlights. Clay soil and high pH do not seem to cause any problems as long as water drains away

from the roots. Plant it as a street tree along boulevards where regular mowing will kill germinating seedlings and in locations where overhead space is limited. Mature specimens will require only light pruning to maintain shape and remove dead wood.

Many cultivars are available: 'Compactum' has dense leaves of dark, waxy green; 'Davidson Hardy' is exceptionally hardy (to minus-15-degrees F.) and has excellent foliage, becoming available in the trade; 'Gracile' has closely-spaced erect branches; 'Macrophyllum' has large leaves while 'Microphyllum' has small leaves; 'Nigrifolium' has very dark green leaves; 'Nobile' has branches which are strongly ascending and fastigate; 'Pyramidale' is narrowly conical in form; 'Recurvifolium' has recurved leaf margins; 'Repandum' has narrow leaves with waxy edges; and 'Tricolor' has leaves variegated with yellow and are pink when young.

Propagation is by seeds or grafting of cultivars. Plants are often grafted onto *L. quihoui* since Tree Ligustrum is resistant to propagation by cuttings. The abundant seedlings found under old trees can be transplanted and used as they are or as grafting stock.

### **Pests**

Scales, white-flies, sooty-mold, and nematodes are problems but not serious.

### **Diseases**

Root rot can be a problem in wet soil.