Halesia carolina: Carolina Silverbell

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Introduction
A North American native tree, Carolina Silverbell grows into a 20 to 40-foot-tall tree with a 15 to 30-foot-spread and a pyramidal silhouette. Some horticulturists do not separate this from Halesia monticola. The two to four-inch-long leaves turn yellow in fall and are among the first to drop in autumn. The tree prefers sandy loam and begins blooming when only 10 to 12 feet tall. The white, bell-shaped, showy blossoms are borne in two to five-inch-long clusters. Flowering occurs along last year’s branches in mid-May. Because the flowers point downward, they are partially hidden by the foliage and best viewed from below. Other ornamental features are the yellow fall color and the bark, which peels off in large, flat scales. The pale yellow fruits are quite attractive as they hang down from last year’s branches. Carolina Silverbell may transplant poorly in the fall.

General Information
Scientific name: Halesia carolina
Pronunciation: hal-EE-zhee-uh kair-oh-LYE-nuh
Common name(s): Carolina Silverbell
Family: Styracaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 5A through 8B (Fig. 2)
Origin: native to North America
Uses: specimen; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; container or planter
Availability: not native to North America

Figure 1. Middle-aged Halesia carolina: Carolina Silverbell
Credits: Ed Gilman

Figure 2. Range
**Description**

Height: 40 to 60 feet
Spread: 15 to 30 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical
Crown shape: round, upright/erect, vase
Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: fine

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: serrulate
Leaf shape: oblong, elliptic (oval), ovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: yellow
Fall characteristic: showy

**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, green
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
Pruning requirement: little required
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: brown
Current year twig thickness: thin

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

**Culture**

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

**Other**

Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: yes
Outstanding tree: yes
Invasive potential: little invasive potential
Ozone sensitivity: unknown
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown
Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

**Use and Management**

This tree is interesting all year long, with attractive medium green foliage, pretty flowers, showy fruits, and exfoliating bark. It branches low to the ground, making a nice lawn or specimen tree and when pruned to one central leader can be used as a street tree in residential areas. The bark shows off nicely with foliage removed from the lower branches, and multistemmed specimens come-to-life when lit from below at nighttime. It is a splendid small tree to locate near a patio or deck.

An understory tree best suited for a partially shaded or shaded location, Silverbell prefers moist, fertile soil with an accumulation of leaf litter and/or mulch. Water the tree during a drought and avoid compacted soil.

Propagation is by seeds sown as soon as ripe or stratified, and by layering, root cuttings, and greenwood cuttings. Small trees and seedlings transplant easily.

One cultivar is listed: `Rosea', with pale pink flowers.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.