Nyssa sinensis: Chinese Tupelo

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

Introduction
The deciduous Chinese tupelo probably grows 35 to 50 feet tall and almost as wide in a rounded shape. Like many other Nyssa, young trees grow with a pyramidal habit. The six-inch-long, green leaves turn brilliant shades of red, yellow, and orange in fall before dropping. Small, greenish-white flowers appear in the spring in axillary clusters and are followed by small blue fruits. These are visible when they drop and stain sidewalks for a period of time but they wash away quickly following a rain.

General Information
Scientific name: Nyssa sinensis
Pronunciation: NISS-uh sigh-NEN-sis
Common name(s): Chinese tupelo
Family: Nyssaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 7A through 9B (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Invasive potential: little invasive potential
Uses: tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; street without sidewalk; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; reclamation; specimen; shade; highway median
Availability: not native to North America

Description
Height: 35 to 50 feet

Figure 1. Young Nyssa sinensis: Chinese tupelo
Credits: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

Figure 2. Range


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**Nyssa sinensis: Chinese Tupelo**

**Spread:** 25 to 35 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical  
**Crown shape:** round, oval  
**Crown density:** moderate  
**Growth rate:** fast  
**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

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

Figure 3. Foliage

### Flower

**Flower color:** unknown  
**Flower characteristics:** not showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round  
**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** unknown  
**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; not showy; typically one trunk; thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** little required  
**Breakage:** resistant  
**Current year twig color:** green  
**Current year twig thickness:** medium  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

### Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun, or partial shade  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; acidic; 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:** unknown

### Use and Management

Chinese tupelo should be grown in full sun on moist, well-drained soil. The tree has not been grown in many places in this country and little else is known about the tree.

### Pests and Diseases

Little is known about the susceptibility of this tree to pests and diseases.