Prunus angustifolia: Chickasaw Plum

Edward F. Gilman, Dennis G. Watson, Ryan W. Klein, Andrew K. Koeser, Deborah R. Hilbert, and Drew C. McLean

Introduction
Growing 20 feet tall and wide, Chickasaw plum forms a rounded mass of slender, thorny branches sprouting from a short trunk. In spring, before the one and a half to three-inch-long leaves appear, Chickasaw plum is festooned with small, white, fragrant flowers which make the trees quite decorative in the presence of other trees which are often still dormant. The 0.5-inch-diameter fruits which follow are red, ripening to yellow, and are extremely popular with wildlife and man. The plums are either eaten fresh or used to make a delicious jelly.

General Information
Scientific name: Prunus angustifolia
Pronunciation: PROO-nus an-gus-tih-FOLE-ee-uh
Common name(s): Chickasaw plum
Family: Rosaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 6A through 9B (Figure 2)
Origin: native to the southern United States
UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status: native
Uses: parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; street without sidewalk; specimen; reclamation; deck or patio; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median; Bonsai

Figure 1. Full Form - angustifolia: Chickasaw Plum
Credits: UF/IFAS

Figure 2. Range
**Description**

Height: 12 to 20 feet  
Spread: 15 to 20 feet  
Crown uniformity: irregular  
Crown shape: round  
Crown density: moderate  
Growth rate: moderate  
Texture: fine

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: alternate  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: serrate, serrulate  
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval), ovate  
Leaf venation: pinnate  
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous  
Leaf blade length: 1 ½ to 3 inches  
Leaf color: dark green and shiny on top, dull green underneath  
Fall color: no color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy

**Flower**

Flower color: white  
Flower characteristics: showy; fragrant; emerges singularly or in dense clusters  
Flowering: late winter to early spring, before leaves emerge

**Fruit**

Fruit shape: oval  
Fruit length: 1/2 to 1 inch  
Fruit covering: fleshy drupe  
Fruit color: yellow to red  
Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**

Trunk/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns present or absent  
Bark: reddish brown and smooth, becoming scaly and shallowly furrowed with age  
Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure  
Breakage: resistant

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**Figure 3.** Leaf - *angustifolia*: Chickasaw Plum  
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**Figure 4.** Flower - *angustifolia*: Chickasaw Plum  
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**Figure 5.** Bark, Young - *angustifolia*: Chickasaw Plum  
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*Prunus angustifolia: Chickasaw Plum*
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**Current year twig color:** brown  
**Current year twig thickness:** thin  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

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**Use and Management**

Grown occasionally with a single leader and used as a street tree, Chickasaw plum is usually seen with a multiple trunk planted as a specimen or in a median strip, or planted on 15 to 25-foot-centers along the entrance road to a commercial property. It tends to sprout from the base of the trunk, forming multi-stemmed thickets. This is the form most commonly seen in its native habitat on old fields and on other disturbed sites. It makes a nice addition to the shrub border in the back yard and is well suited for planting around the patio or deck although it does not form a neat crown and looks a little unkempt during the winter. The crown often leans to one side or the other. Occasional pruning can significantly improve the form of the crown.

A North American native tree, Chickasaw plum is very easily grown and has no special cultural requirements. It tolerates drought, sandy or clay soil but does poorly in alkaline pH. These small trees grow quickly but have a relatively short life. This should not stop you from planting the tree since it will serve the landscape well during its life.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Tent caterpillar can defoliate trees and could weaken them with repeated defoliations.

**Additional References**


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**Culture**

**Light requirement:** full sun to partial shade  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; acidic; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** unknown

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**Other**

**Roots:** not a problem  
**Winter interest:** yes  
**Outstanding tree:** no  
**Ozone sensitivity:** sensitive  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible  
**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases