**Prunus umbellata**: Flatwoods Plum

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**Introduction**

A native of the woods of the southeastern United States, Flatwoods Plum is a round-topped, deciduous tree, reaching 20 feet in height with a 15-foot spread, that is most often planted for its spectacular display of blooms. It may look a little ragged in winter. In late February, before the two-inch-long, finely serrate leaves appear, these small trees take on a white, billowy, almost cloud-like appearance when they are clothed in the profuse, small, white flower clusters. These half-inch blooms are followed by one-inch-long, edible, purple fruits which vary in flavor from very tart to sweet. These plums are very attractive to various forms of wildlife.

**General Information**

**Scientific name**: *Prunus umbellata*

**Pronunciation**: PROO-nus um-bell-AH-tuh

**Common name(s)**: Flatwoods Plum

**Family**: Rosaceae

**USDA hardiness zones**: 8A through 9B (Fig. 2)

**Origin**: native to North America

**Invasive potential**: little invasive potential

**Uses**: deck or patio; specimen; street without sidewalk; 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; Bonsai; container or planter

**Availability**: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

**Figure 1. Mature Prunus umbellata: Flatwoods Plum**

**Figure 2. Range**
**Description**

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

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: serrate, serrulate  
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval), ovate  
Leaf venation: pinnate, brachidodrome  
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous  
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: yellow  
Fall characteristic: not showy

**Flower**

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

**Fruit**

Fruit shape: round  
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch  
Fruit covering: dry or hard  
Fruit color: purple  
Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; 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: brown  
Current year twig thickness: thin  
Wood specific gravity: unknown

**Culture**

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade  
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained  
Drought tolerance: moderate  
Aerosol salt tolerance: none

**Other**

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

**Use and Management**

Flatwoods Plum thrives in full sun or partial shade on a wide variety of soils. When placed in sandy soil, it grows best with irrigation and some shade in the afternoon. Trees grow quickly when young but considerably slower when mature and bearing fruit. A bit weedy in growth habit, proper training and pruning can create an attractive specimen or small median strip or street tree, especially for planting beneath power lines or in other areas were overhead space is limited. Few root suckers form on this plant; many form on *Prunus angustifolia*.  

Do not expect a row of them to form a uniform shape. The tree branches low to the ground making it a nice tall element in a backyard shrub border. Lower branches need to be removed in order to train as a street tree. Small-diameter, interior branches can be removed in winter to open up the crown for a more formal, attractive shape and habit. May live 30 to 40-years on a good site.

Propagation is by seed which must be stratified for several months to germinate.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Tent caterpillars occasionally infest Flatwoods Plum.