

# *Gordonia lasianthus*: Loblolly-Bay<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

A native American, usually single-trunked, evergreen tree, Loblolly-Bay reaches a height of 35 to 60 feet with a columnar or pyramidal, very open growth habit. The two to seven-inch-long, glossy, dark green leaves are a light grey color on the underside, giving a two-toned effect in the wind. Although evergreen, several individual leaves at a time will turn a brilliant scarlet color in the fall adding to its attractiveness. The white, two to three-inch-wide,



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Gordonia lasianthus*: Loblolly-Bay

five-petalled, cup-shaped flowers open from late spring through summer and are very attractive but sparsely produced throughout the canopy.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Gordonia lasianthus*

**Pronunciation:** gor-DOE-nee-uh lay-zee-ANTH-us

**Common name(s):** Loblolly-Bay, Sweet-Bay

**Family:** *Theaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7A through 9B (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential

**Uses:** specimen; espalier; reclamation

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



Figure 2. Range

1. This document is ENH443, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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## Description

**Height:** 35 to 60 feet  
**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical  
**Crown shape:** columnar  
**Crown density:** open  
**Growth rate:** moderate  
**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** serrulate  
**Leaf shape:** oblong, oblanceolate  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate, reticulate, brachidodrome  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen, broadleaf evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** red  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

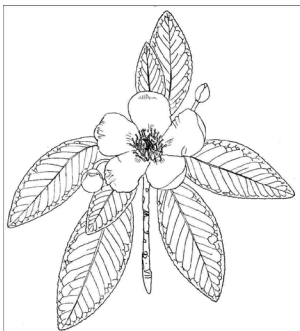


Figure 3. Foliage

## Flower

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

## Fruit

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

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches don't droop; not showy; typically one trunk; thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** little required  
**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown, green  
**Current year twig thickness:** medium  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** shade tolerant, full sun, partial sun or partial shade  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; acidic; extended flooding  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no  
**Outstanding tree:** yes  
**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown  
**Pest resistance:** free of serious pests and diseases

## Use and Management

Loblolly-Bay makes an attractive specimen planting and its light, airy growth habit lends itself well to smaller, partially enclosed locations. In moist soils, Loblolly-Bay naturalizes well and is well-suited to the low-maintenance landscape. Due to the shape of the crown, it makes a suitable tree in urban areas with restricted, narrow overhead space, and should do well as a street tree, although it has not been extensively used yet.

Preferring partial shade and moist soil, Loblolly-Bay can tolerate full sun only with sufficient moisture. Loblolly-Bay has a shallow root system and will die if not watered during periods of drought. It is found in the wild most often growing in wet sites in the shade of maples, cypress and pines. It is well-suited for planting in boggy and other poorly drained soils. It is not salt-tolerant. Not for dry climates.

Propagation is by seeds which germinate well after stratification, or by cuttings.

The cultivar 'Variegata' has white and green foliage, white flowers.

## Pests

Pest problems are borers in weakened trees, aphids, and caterpillars.

## Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.