

Sideroxylon lanuginosum: Gum bully¹

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Introduction

This native North American deciduous tree grows 40- to 50-feet in height and has an open canopy. Because there appear to be many forms of the plant in nature, from shrubby to tree form, nursery operators could make superior selections. The bark varies considerably from tree to tree, making this a potential selection criterion for cultivar development. The leathery, shiny green leaves are smooth on their upperside and a fuzzy, red/brown to gray beneath. They drop in late fall without a show. Small, fragrant white flowers appear from June to July and are followed in fall by large, shiny, blue/black, fleshy fruits that are extremely popular with birds and other wildlife. While the fruits are edible to man, they have been known to produce unpleasant side-effects if eaten in quantity.

General Information

Scientific name: *Sideroxylon lanuginosum*

Pronunciation: sid-der-oh-ZEE-lon lan-oo-gih-NOH-sum

Common name(s): gum bully, chittamwood, gum bumelia, gum elastic buckthorn

Family: *Sapotaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5A through 9B (Figure 2)

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: native

Uses: reclamation; specimen; shade; highway median; street without sidewalk



Figure 1. Mature *Bumelia lanuginosa*: Chittamwood.
Credits: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

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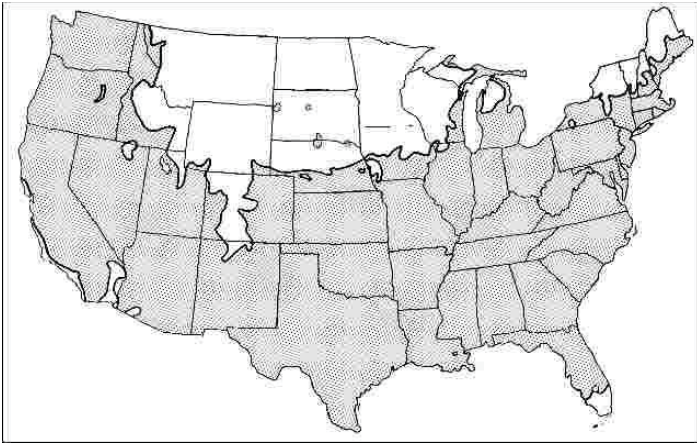


Figure 2. Range.

Description

Height: 40 to 50 feet

Spread: 25 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: spreading

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Figure 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: oblanceolate, oblong, obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches, 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

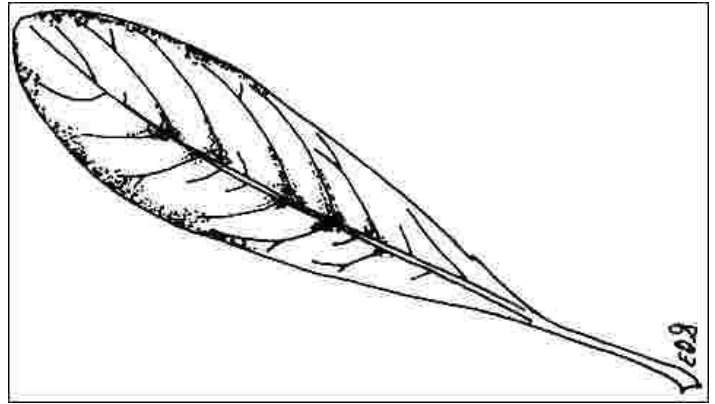


Figure 3. Foliage.

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than 0.5 inch, 0.5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: blue, black

Fruit characteristics: attracts squirrels/mammals; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: gray, brown

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; alkaline; 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: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

Young trees require training to display a tree-like form since a shrubby, rounded ball of foliage often develops without pruning. It is well suited for a reclamation site due to the adaptability to a wide range of soil types. It could be planted in urban and suburban landscapes, especially in areas that receive minimum maintenance.

The common names of gum bumelia and gum elastic are derived from the sap that quickly oozes from cuts or cracks to the bark. Youngsters in pioneer days were known to chew this sap as a gum.

Chittamwood should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well drained soils. Trees found on poor soils in the wild grow slowly and are stunted, but with normal care they will grow well in a variety of landscapes.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

It is pest-free.