

Chrysophyllum oliviforme: Satinleaf¹

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Introduction

Reaching a height of 45 feet and a spread of 25 feet in an oval form, satinleaf is a medium-sized tree noted for its unusually beautiful foliage. The evergreen, 4-inch-long leaves are a glossy, dark green above and a glowing, bright copper color beneath, providing a beautiful, two-toned effect when breezes cause the leaves to flutter. Leaves in some respects resemble those of the brown-back southern magnolias. This Florida native makes an attractive freestanding lawn specimen or blends well in a shrubbery border or naturalized landscape. It could be tried as a street tree or parking lot tree. Use it cautiously since it can be severely damaged at 32°F and below. The trunks are rather showy because they are covered with thin, light reddish-brown, scaly bark. Small, inconspicuous flowers are followed by small, sweet, purple or black fruits.

General Information

Scientific name: *Chrysophyllum oliviforme*

Pronunciation: kriss-so-FILL-um awl-liv-ih-FOR-mee

Common name(s): Satinleaf

Family: *Sapotaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Figure 2)

Origin: native to Florida, the West Indies, and Central America

UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status: native

Uses: street without sidewalk; deck or patio; screen; specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree lawn 4–6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; shade



Figure 1. Full Form—*Chrysophyllum oliviforme*: Satinleaf

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Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 35 to 45 feet

Spread: 18 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: oval

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, broadleaf evergreen

Leaf blade length: 1 to 5 inches

Leaf color: dark green and shiny on top, paler green and covered with a dense, rusty pubescence underneath

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy



Figure 3. Leaf—*Chrysophyllum oliviforme*: Satinleaf



Figure 4. Leaf, Under—*Chrysophyllum oliviforme*: Satinleaf



Figure 5. Canopy—*Chrysophyllum oliviforme*: Satinleaf

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: not showy; bell-shaped; emerges singly or in clusters from leaf axils

Flowering: year-round

Fruit

Fruit shape: long, oval or olive-shaped

Fruit length: ¾ inch

Fruit covering: fleshy drupe

Fruit color: turns from green to purple or black when ripe

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem; excretes a milky sap

Fruiting: year-round



Figure 6. Fruit—*Chrysophyllum oliviforme*: Satinleaf

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/branches: branches droop; showy; typically one trunk; no thorns

Bark: reddish brown, thin, and scaly

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown



Figure 7. Bark—*Chrysophyllum oliviforme*: Satinleaf

Credits: Gitta Hasing

Culture

Light requirement: full sun to partial shade

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained to occasionally wet

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Satinleaf should be grown in full sun or partial shade on fertile, well-drained soils. Plants should be mulched and watered faithfully, although they are able to withstand occasional drought. The tree has not been widely planted but should make a good, durable urban tree in USDA hardiness zones 10b and 11. Trunk and branch structure is good, making this a clean, long-lasting tree.

Star apple, *Chrysophyllum cainito*, closely related, bears leaves of similar decorative quality and is grown for its larger (up to four inches long), more edible fruits.

Propagation is by seed, or semi-hardwood cuttings under mist.

Pests and Diseases

Caterpillars will occasionally chew the leaves, gall mite can deform leaves, and leaf notcher chews leaves.

Reference

Koeser, A.K., Friedman, M.H., Hasing, G., Finley, H., Schelb, J. 2017. *Trees: South Florida and the Keys*. Gainesville: University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.