

Gordonia lasianthus 'Variegata': 'Variegata' Loblolly-Bay¹

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Introduction

Loblolly-bay is an evergreen, native tree that is usually single-trunked. This cultivar of Loblolly-Bay reaches a height of 35 to 60 feet with a columnar or pyramidal, very open growth habit. The 2- to 7-inch-long, glossy, dark green variegated 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, 2- to 3-inch-wide, five-petaled, 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): 'Variegata' loblolly-bay, 'Variegata' sweet-bay

Family: *Theaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7A through 9B (Figure 2)

Origin: native to North America

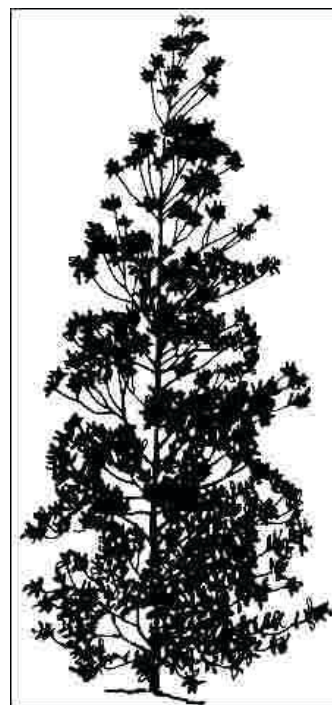


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Gordonia lasianthus* 'Variegata': 'Variegata' loblolly-bay.

Credits: UF/IFAS

Invasive potential: native cultivar

Uses: specimen; espalier; reclamation

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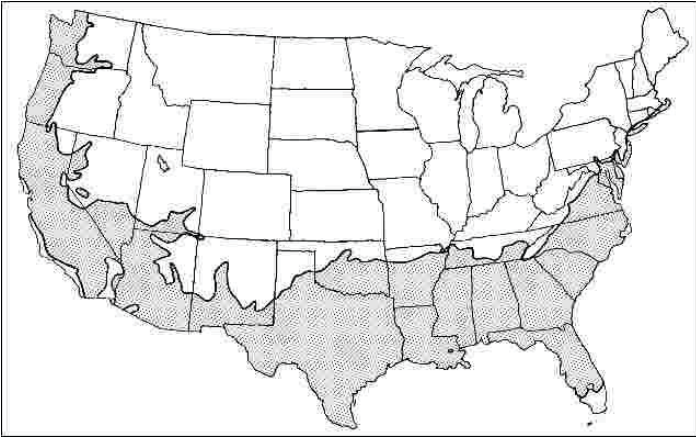


Figure 2. Range.
Credits: UF/IFAS

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 (Figure 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: variegated

Fall color: red

Fall characteristic: not showy

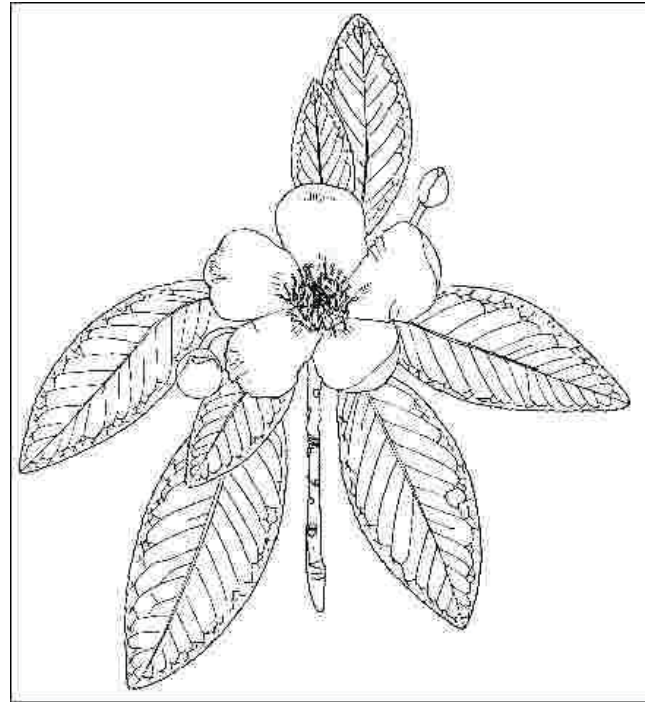


Figure 3. Foliage.
Credits: UF/IFAS

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than 0.5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: brown, green

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

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade, shade tolerant

Soil tolerances: loam; clay; 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 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. Loblolly-bay is not salt-tolerant. Not for dry climates.

Propagation is by cuttings.

Pests

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

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.