

Photinia serratifolia var. *aculeata*: 'Aculeata' Chinese Photinia¹

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Introduction

Small, white flowers arranged in dense, showy, eight-inch-diameter clusters at branch tips and large, shiny, dark green leaves combine to make Chinese photinia an attractive evergreen. It is suited for multiple landscape applications provided it is kept in the full sun to reduce leaf spot disease. In some areas of the country, it is an under-used landscape tree with very showy flowers and bright red fruit. This variety has reddish young stems, more serrate leaves than the species, and reaches about 10 feet in height. Often kept trimmed into a hedge shape, multitrunked Chinese photinia creates an ideal small tree with the proper training, and when the lower branches are removed, the natural rounded canopy adds to its attractive silhouette. New growth is tinged pink, though not as much as *Photinia glabra*, and young twigs are red to reddish-brown. The serrate-margined leaves can reach eight inches in length and are two inches wide. The springtime flower clusters are followed by small, red berry-like fruit clusters which persist through the winter.

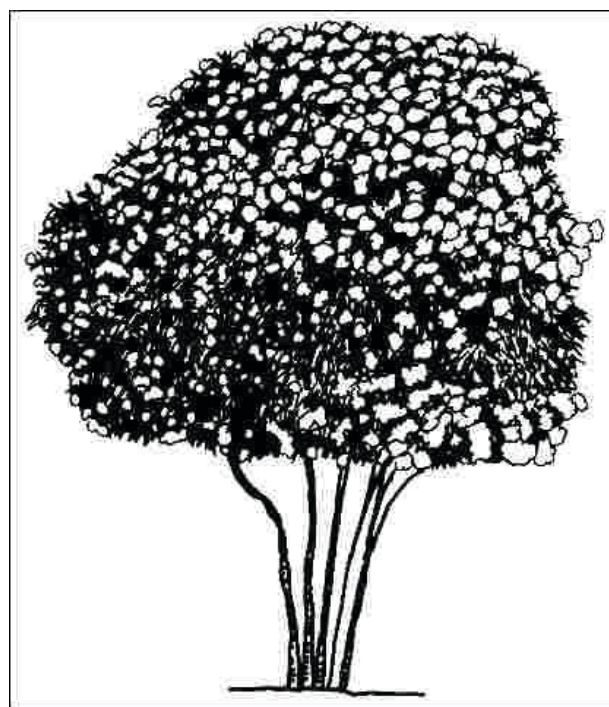


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Photinia serratifolia* var. *aculeata*: 'Aculeata' Chinese photinia.

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General Information

Scientific name: *Photinia serratifolia* var. *aculeata*

Pronunciation: foe-TIN-nee-uh ser-RAY-ti-fol-ee-uh

Common name(s): 'Aculeata' Chinese photinia

Family: *Rosaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 6A through 11 (Figure 2)

Origin: not native to North America

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Invasive potential: not considered a problem species at this time, may be recommended (North, Central, South)

Uses: street without sidewalk; deck or patio; screen; hedge; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100–200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree lawn 3–4 feet wide; tree lawn 4–6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; urban tolerant; highway median; container or planter; specimen

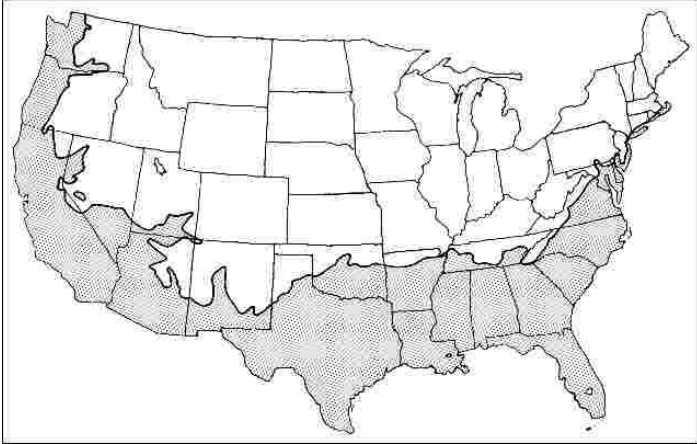


Figure 2. Range.
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Description

Height: 10 to 12 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: round, vase

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Figure 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval), oblong

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, broadleaf evergreen

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

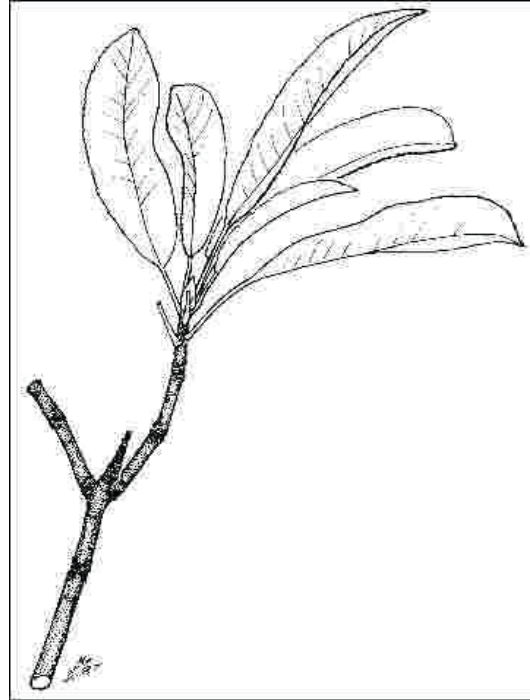


Figure 3. Foliage.
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Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: red

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

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green, brown

Current year twig thickness: thick

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Nurseries could produce trees with a single leader and market them as street trees. They stay fairly small, grow fast when young but slow down later as the crown broadens. Great for beneath powerlines.

Chinese photinia needs well-drained soil and a full sun location. Leaves often become infected with leaf spot fungi when grown in shade or when the leaves remain too moist. Plants grow at a moderate rate and tolerate pruning very well, although the bottom of the plant often thins when clipped into a hedge. There are much better plants for hedges, although photinia makes a good tall screen plant. Well-adapted to sand or clay (well-drained), acid or alkaline soil, photinia likes to be kept on the dry side and is very drought-tolerant. It is popular in all of USDA hardiness zones 7 and 8 as a highway median plant and could be used more as a multi-stemmed specimen, street or patio tree.

'Nova' reaches 10 feet in height with a seven- to eight-foot spread. There is a hybrid between red-leaved Photinia (*Photinia glabra*) and Chinese Photinia (*Photinia serratifolia*) which perhaps displays the best characteristics of both parents, called *Photinia x fraseri*. It is very popular in the nursery trade and is often used as a hedge or foundation plant, a usage which is quite inappropriate due to its large size and rapid growth rate.

Propagation is by cuttings.

Pests

It is usually pest-free but caterpillars, mites, scales, and European fruit-tip moth are sometimes a problem.

Diseases

Chinese photinia is usually disease-free, except for leaf spot which can be devastating. Fire blight and mildew in shady locations can also be troublesome.