

Photinia serratifolia: 'Nova' 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 located in the full sun to reduce leaf spot disease. 'Nova' reaches only 10 feet in height with a seven to eight-foot spread. An under-used landscape tree with very showy flowers and bright red fruit. 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.

General Information

Scientific name: *Photinia serratifolia*

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

Common name(s): 'Nova' Chinese photinia

Family: *Rosaceae*

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

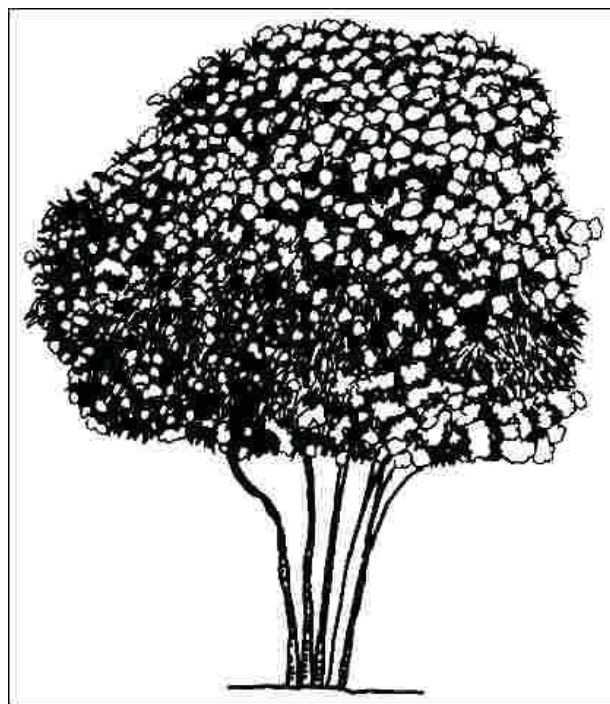


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Photinia serratifolia*: 'Nova' Chinese photinia.
Credits: UF/IFAS

Origin: not native to North America

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

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> 6 ft wide; urban tolerant; highway median; container or planter; specimen

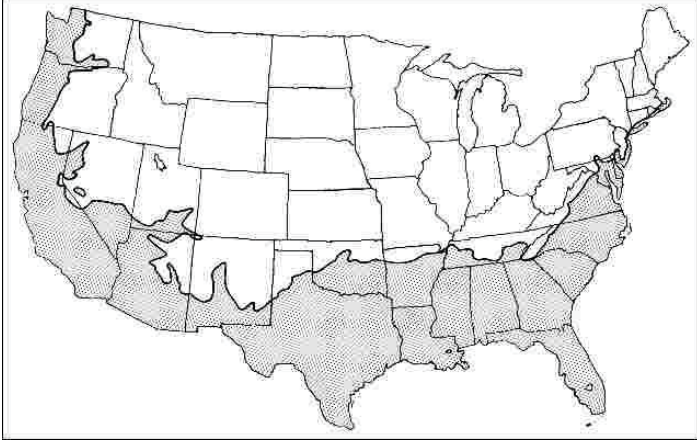


Figure 2. Range

Credits: UF/IFAS

Description

Height: 10 to 12 feet

Spread: 7 to 8 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: red

Fall characteristic: not showy

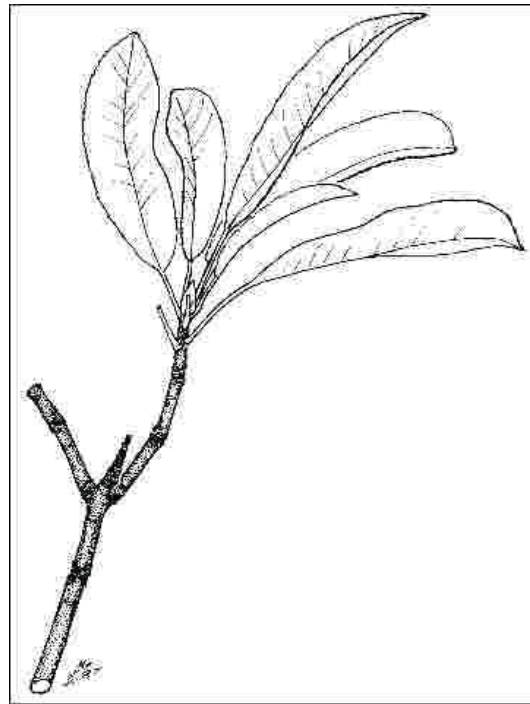


Figure 3. Foliage

Credits: UF/IFAS

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .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. They are great for planting 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.

The cultivar 'Aculeata' has reddish young stems, more serrate leaves than the species, and reaches about 10 feet in height. 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.