

Prunus angustifolia: Chickasaw Plum¹

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Introduction

Growing 20 feet tall and wide, Chickasaw plum forms a rounded mass of slender, thorny branches sprouting from a short trunk. In spring, before the one and a half to three-inch-long leaves appear, Chickasaw plum is festooned with small, white, fragrant flowers which make the trees quite decorative in the presence of other trees which are often still dormant. The 0.5-inch-diameter fruits which follow are red, ripening to yellow, and are extremely popular with wildlife and man. The plums are either eaten fresh or used to make a delicious jelly.



Figure 1. Full Form - *angustifolia*: Chickasaw plum
Credits: UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Prunus angustifolia*

Pronunciation: PROO-nus an-gus-tih-FOLE-ee-uh

Common name(s): Chickasaw plum

Family: *Rosaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 6A through 9B (Figure 2)

Origin: native to the southern United States

UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status: native

Uses: parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; street without sidewalk; specimen; reclamation; deck or patio; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median; Bonsai



Figure 2. Range

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Description

Height: 12 to 20 feet

Spread: 15 to 20 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: round

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate, serrulate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval), ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 1 ½ to 3 inches

Leaf color: dark green and shiny on top, dull green underneath

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy



Figure 3. Leaf - *angustifolia*: Chickasaw plum
Credits: UF/IFAS

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: showy; fragrant; emerges singularly or in dense clusters

Flowering: late winter to early spring, before leaves emerge



Figure 4. Flower - *angustifolia*: Chickasaw plum
Credits: UF/IFAS

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: 1/2 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy drupe

Fruit color: yellow to red

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

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns present or absent

Bark: reddish brown and smooth, becoming scaly and shallowly furrowed with age

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: resistant



Figure 5. Bark, Young - *angustifolia*: Chickasaw plum
Credits: UF/IFAS

Current year twig color: brown
Current year twig thickness: thin
Wood specific gravity: unknown



Figure 6. Bark, Mature - *angustifolia*: Chickasaw plum
Credits: Gitta Hasing, UF/IFAS

Culture

Light requirement: full sun to partial shade
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

Other

Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: yes
Outstanding tree: no
Ozone sensitivity: sensitive
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible
Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Grown occasionally with a single leader and used as a street tree, Chickasaw plum is usually seen with a multiple trunk planted as a specimen or in a median strip, or planted on 15 to 25-foot-centers along the entrance road to a commercial property. It tends to sprout from the base of the trunk, forming multi-stemmed thickets. This is the form most commonly seen in its native habitat on old fields and on other disturbed sites. It makes a nice addition to the shrub border in the back yard and is well suited for planting around the patio or deck although it does not form a neat crown and looks a little unkempt during the winter. The crown often leans to one side or the other. Occasional pruning can significantly improve the form of the crown.

A North American native tree, Chickasaw plum is very easily grown and has no special cultural requirements. It tolerates drought, sandy or clay soil but does poorly in alkaline pH. These small trees grow quickly but have a relatively short life. This should not stop you from planting the tree since it will serve the landscape well during its life.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Tent caterpillar can defoliate trees and could weaken them with repeated defoliations.

Reference

Koeser, A. K., Hasing, G., Friedman, M. H., and Irving, R. B. 2015. Trees: North & Central Florida. University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.