

# *Styrax japonicus* 'Emerald Pagoda': 'Emerald Pagoda' Japanese Snowbell<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Japanese Snowbell is a small deciduous tree that slowly grows from 20 to 30 feet in height and has rounded canopy with a horizontal branching pattern. With lower branches removed, it forms a more vase-shaped patio-sized shade tree. The smooth, attractive bark has orange-brown interlacing fissures adding winter interest to any landscape. The white, bell-shaped, drooping flower clusters of Japanese Snowbell are quite showy in May to June.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Styrax japonicus*

**Pronunciation:** STY-racks juh-PAWN-ih-kuss

**Common name(s):** 'Emerald Pagoda' Japanese Snowbell

**Family:** *Styracaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 6A through 8A (Figure 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** not assessed/incomplete assessment

**Uses:** trained as a standard; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100–200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200

sq ft; tree lawn 3–4 feet wide; tree lawn 4–6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; specimen; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; container or planter; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); highway median

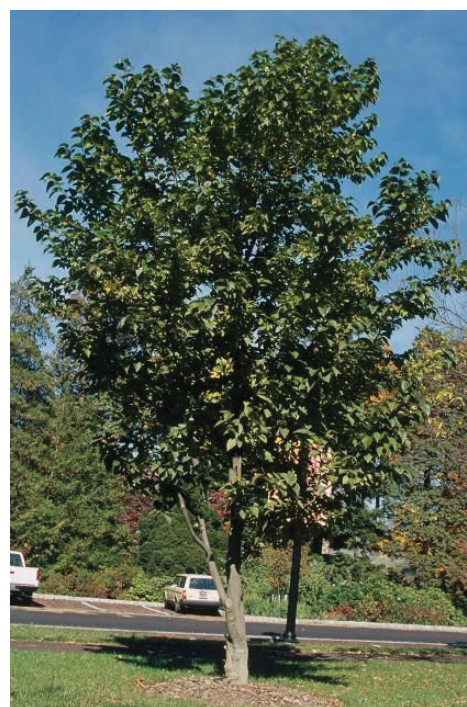


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Styrax japonicus* 'Emerald Pagoda': 'Emerald Pagoda' Japanese snowbell.  
Credits: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

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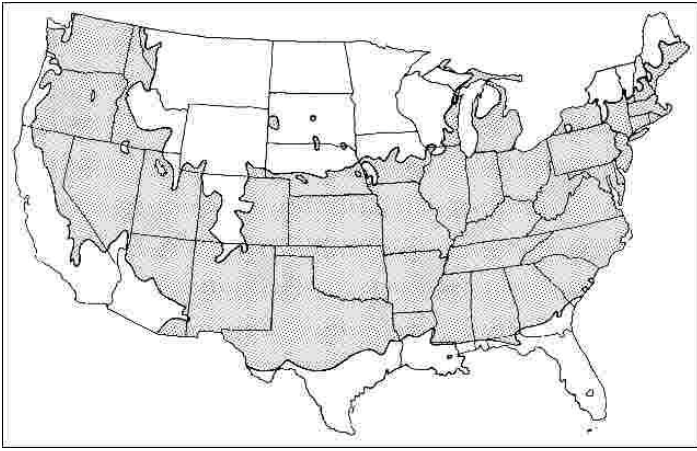


Figure 2. Range

## Description

**Height:** 20 to 30 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 25 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical

**Crown shape:** round, vase

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Figure 3)

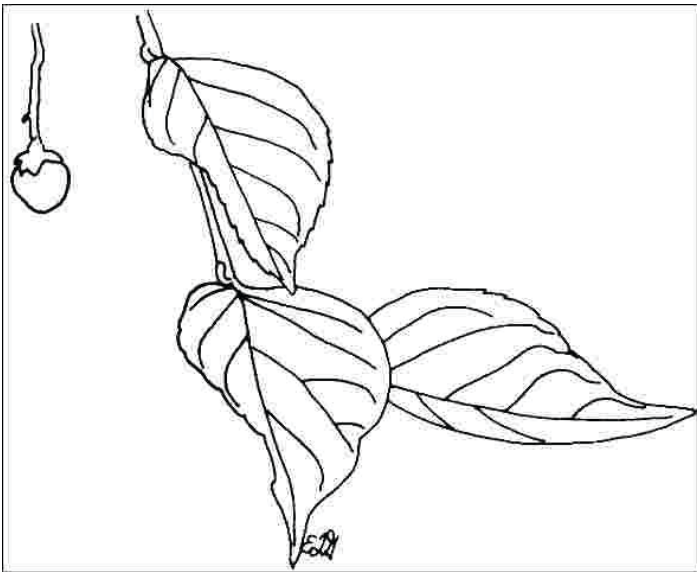


Figure 3. Foliage

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** sinuate/undulate, entire, serrate

**Leaf shape:** oblong, elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** pinnate, brachidodrome

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches, 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** yellow, red

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** pink

**Flower characteristics:** showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval, round

**Fruit length:** less than 0.5 inch, 0.5 to 1 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** green

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

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

**Pruning requirement:** little required

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

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

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

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** yes

**Outstanding tree:** yes

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown

**Pest resistance:** free of serious pests and diseases

## Use and Management

*Styrax* species is an excellent small patio tree where the flowers and interesting bark can be viewed up close; however, the flowers attract tremendous numbers of bees and one should be cautious about approaching the plant at that time. Japanese Snowbell also makes a wonderful addition to the mixed shrubbery border. Due to its small stature and vase-shape, it can make a nice street tree where overhead space is limited. The fruit is somewhat showy and may cause a small litter problem for a short time in the fall. Fall leaf color is unreliable.

Snowbell prefers a peaty, acid soil that is moist but not waterlogged. In colder areas (USDA hardiness zone 5), locate this tree in an area protected from winter winds. Plants grow better with a couple hours of shade in USDA hardiness zones 7 and 8 but full sun is fine in the North.

Cultivars include: 'Carillon' is hardy only to zone 6, grows about one-foot per year and has a weeping habit, can be staked to encourage weeping habit; 'Crystal'—upright to fastigate habit, black green foliage, crisp white flowers with purple pedicels (zone 5); 'Issai'—cold hardy to zone 6, grows faster than other species and roots easily; 'Pink Chimes'—pink flowers, cold hardy to zone 6.

Propagate by softwood cuttings in summer. Seeds eventually germinate but exhibit a double dormancy.

## Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases of major concern. Ambrosia beetle can attack and lead to further decline of stressed plants.