**Chrysophyllum oliviforme**

*Figure 1. Young Satinleaf.*

**Satinleaf**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

**INTRODUCTION**

Reaching a height of 40 feet and a spread of 20 feet in an oval form, Satinleaf is a medium-sized tree noted for its unusually beautiful foliage (Fig. 1). The evergreen, four-inch-long leaves are a glossy, dark green above and a glowing, bright copper color beneath, providing a beautiful, two-toned effect when breezes cause the leaves to flutter. Leaves in some respects resemble those of the brown-back Southern Magnolias. This Florida native makes an attractive freestanding lawn specimen or blends well in a shrubbery border or naturalized landscape. It could be tried as a street tree or parking lot tree. Use it cautiously since it can be severely damaged at 32-degrees F. and below. The trunks are rather showy because they are covered with thin, light reddish-brown, scaly bark. Small, inconspicuous flowers are followed by small, sweet, purple fruits.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** *Chrysophyllum oliviforme*

**Pronunciation:** kriss-so-FILL-um awl-iv-ih-FOR-mee

**Common name(s):** Satinleaf

**Family:** Sapotaceae

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); near a deck or patio; screen; shade tree; specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 35 to 45 feet

**Spread:** 18 to 25 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** oval

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Crown density: moderate  
Growth rate: slow  
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: entire  
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)  
Leaf venation: pinnate  
Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen  
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: no fall color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white  
Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; year round flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated  
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch  
Fruit covering: fleshy  
Fruit color: purple  
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; suited for human consumption; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns  
Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure  
Breakage: resistant  
Current year twig color: brown  
Current year twig thickness: medium
Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained
**Drought tolerance:** high
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest
**Outstanding tree:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Satinleaf should be grown in full sun or partial shade on fertile, well-drained soils. Plants should be mulched and watered faithfully, although they are able to withstand occasional drought. The tree has not been widely planted but should make a good, durable urban tree in USDA hardiness zones 10b and 11. Trunk and branch structure is good, making this a clean, long-lasting tree.

Star-apple, *Chrysophyllum cainito*, closely related, bears leaves of similar decorative quality and is grown for its larger (up to four inches long), more edible fruits.

Propagation is by seed, or semi-hardwood cuttings under mist.

**Pests and Diseases**

Caterpillars will occasionally chew the leaves, gall mite can deform leaves, and leaf notcher chews leaves.