Franklinia alatamaha
Franklin-Tree

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INTRODUCTION

This is an excellent small tree native to Georgia, reaching a maximum of 30 feet but it is usually smaller in a sunny landscape (Fig. 1). It is somewhat pyramidal when young becoming more rounded with age with many thin stems and trunks. It is best used as a specimen or in borders, to show off its fragrant, white, camellia-like flowers, three inches across, that bloom from July to late summer when few other trees bloom. The bright green foliage turns a vivid orange-red in the fall while some flowers are still in bloom. Ridged grey bark with prominent vertical white striations adds winter interest. Franklin-Tree typically grows with numerous vertical stems or trunks originating at or near ground level.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Franklinia alatamaha
Pronunciation: frank-LIN-ee-uh
uh-laht-uh-MAH-hah
Common name(s): Franklin-Tree, Franklinia
Family: Theaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 8 (Fig. 2)
Origin: native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; near a deck or patio; specimen; no proven urban tolerance
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 25 feet
Spread: 10 to 15 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms
Crown shape: round; pyramidal
Crown density: dense

Figure 1. Middle-aged Franklin-Tree.
**Franklinia alatamaha -- Franklin-Tree**

**Growth rate:** slow  
**Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
- **Leaf type:** simple  
- **Leaf margin:** serrate  
- **Leaf shape:** oblong; oblanceolate; obovate  
- **Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate  
- **Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
- **Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches  
- **Leaf color:** green  
- **Fall color:** orange; red  
- **Fall characteristic:** showy

**Flower**

- **Flower color:** white  
- **Flower characteristics:** fall flowering; pleasant fragrance; summer flowering; very showy

**Fruit**

- **Fruit shape:** round  
- **Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch  
- **Fruit covering:** dry or hard  
- **Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**

- **Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; showy trunk; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns  
- **Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure  
- **Breakage:** resistant  
- **Current year twig color:** brown; green  
- **Current year twig thickness:** medium
USE AND MANAGEMENT

Franklin-Tree does best in well-drained, rich, acid soil, with ample water, and partial sun in the southern part of its range. Drainage must be excellent and the tree does not tolerate clay soil and is only slightly or moderately drought-tolerant. Best to provide a permanent irrigation system for Franklin-Tree.

Pests

It has no known pests.

Diseases

The most serious problem of Franklin-Tree is a root rot disease. The best protection is to plant in a soil where the disease has not been active. The tree has been difficult to establish in some areas, perhaps because of disease problems. But the beauty of this tree makes your extra effort worthwhile.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
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