

Halesia monticola Mountain Silverbell¹

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INTRODUCTION

Mountain Silverbell grows into a 40-foot tree in its natural habitat but is about 20 to 30 feet tall in gardens and landscapes, with an upright-spreading crown (Fig. 1). The tree prefers sandy loam and begins blooming when only 10 to 12 feet tall. The flowers are larger than those of *Halesia carolina*. The white, bell-shaped blossoms are borne in clusters of up to five. Flowering occurs along last years branches in mid-spring on the previous season's wood. Because the flowers point downward, they are partially hidden by the foliage and best viewed from below. Other ornamental features are the yellow fall color and the bark, which peels off in large, flat scales. The pale yellow fruits are quite attractive as they hang down from last years branches. Mountain Silverbell may transplant poorly in the fall.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Halesia monticola*

Pronunciation: hal-EE-zhee-uh mawn-tih-KOLE-uh

Common name(s): Mountain Silverbell

Family: *Styracaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 9A (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

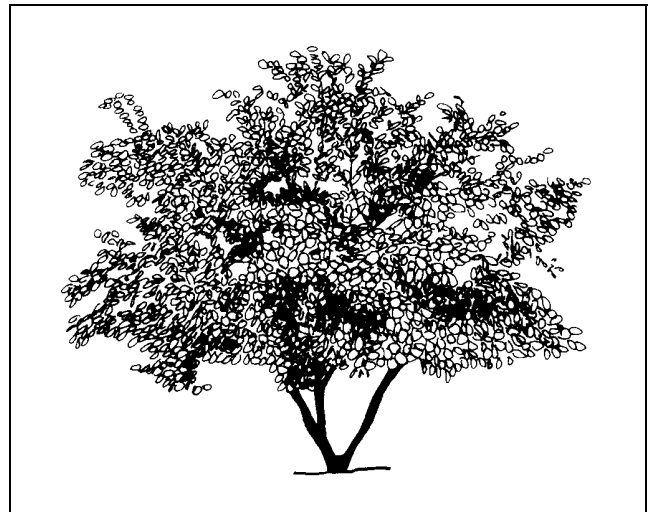


Figure 1. Middle-aged Mountain Silverbell.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 40 to 60 feet

Spread: 20 to 30 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: oval; pyramidal; vase shape

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

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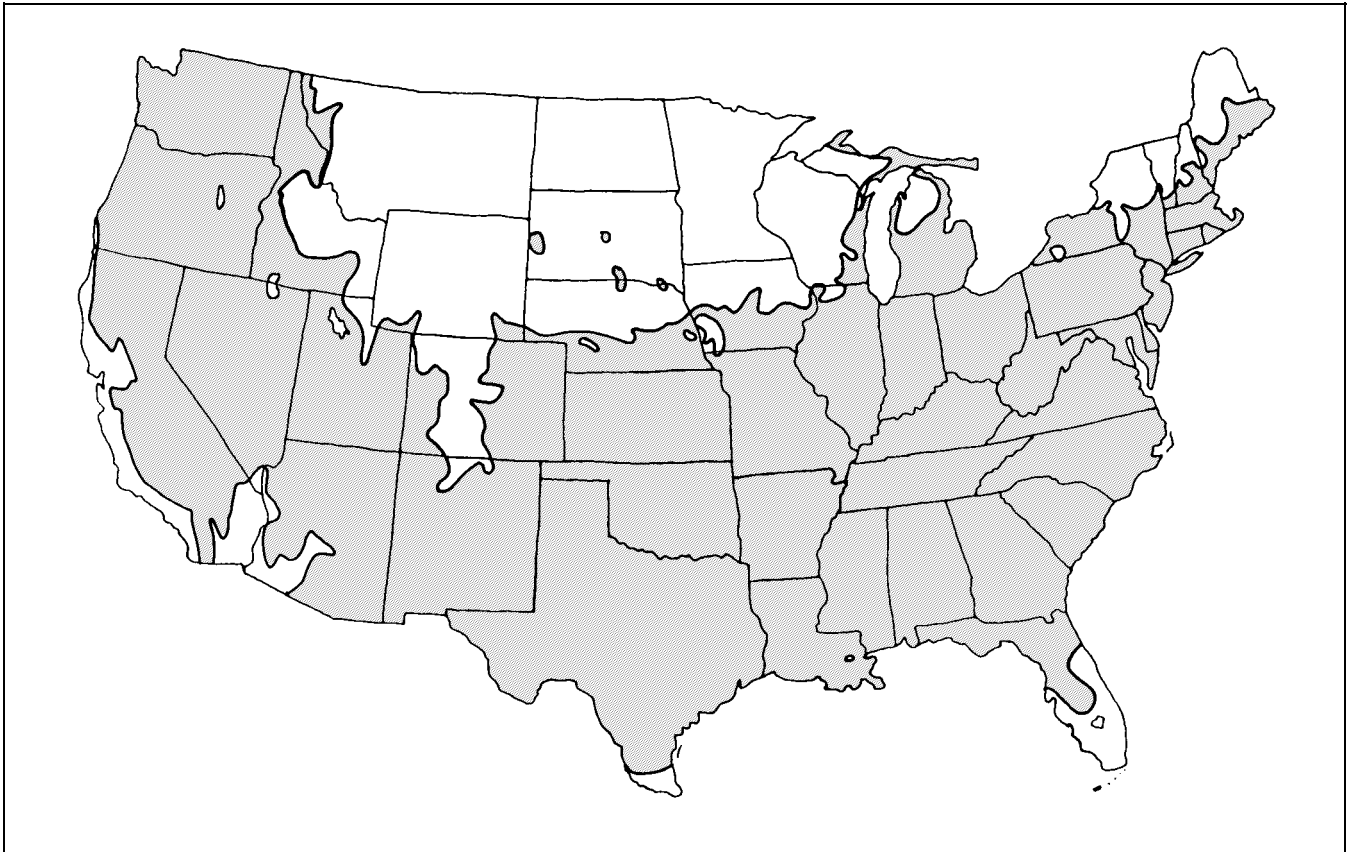


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: yellow
Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristics: spring flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: yellow
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; 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: thin

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Other

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

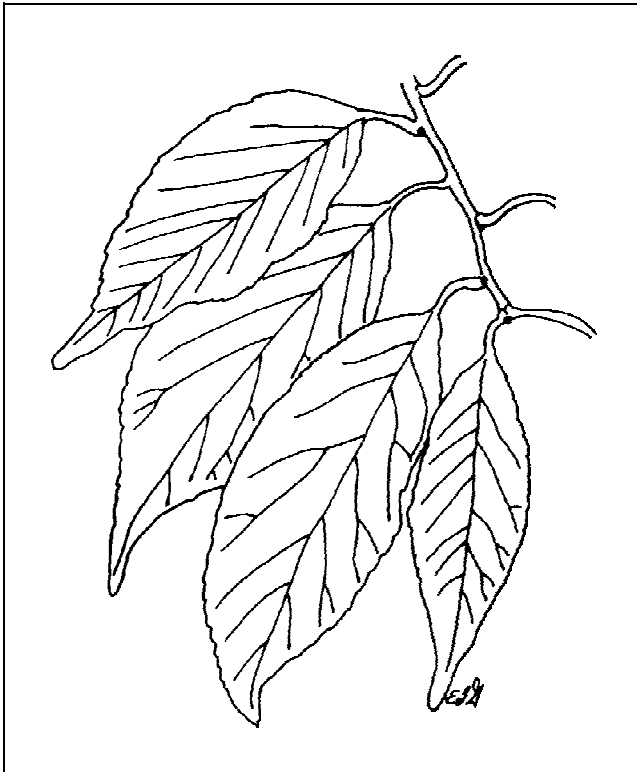


Figure 3. Foliage of Mountain Silverbell.

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: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

This tree is interesting all year long, with attractive medium green foliage, pretty flowers, showy fruits, and exfoliating bark. It branches low to the ground, making a nice lawn or specimen tree and when pruned to one central leader can be used as a street tree in residential areas in less than full-day sun. The bark shows off nicely with foliage removed from the lower branches, and multistemmed specimens come-to-life when lit from below at nighttime.

An understory tree best suited for a partially shaded or shaded location, silverbell prefers moist, fertile soil with an accumulation of leaf litter and/or mulch. Water during a drought and avoid compacted soil.

One cultivar is listed: 'Rosea'--pale pink flowers.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases of serious concern, occasionally leaf spot.