**Photinia glabra**
Red-Leaf Photinia

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**INTRODUCTION**

Widely planted for its attractive, bright-red, new leaf growth, Japanese Photinia is a densely-foliated, broadleaf evergreen which grows 15 to 20 feet in height (Fig. 1). Bright red leaves among the dark green ones afford a bit of foliage interest throughout the fall and winter in southern climates (USDA hardiness zones 8 and 9). The fragrant, four-inch-wide flower clusters appear in early spring and are followed by somewhat showy, red berries which ripen to black.

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**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** *Photinia glabra*

**Pronunciation:** foe-TIN-nee-uh GLAY-bruh

**Common name(s):** Red-Leaf Photinia, Red-Top

**Family:** Rosaceae

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; hedge; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (> 6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; screen; trainable as a standard; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

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

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**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 15 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

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

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Photinia glabra -- Red-Leaf Photinia

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: oval; round; vase shape
Crown density: dense
Growth rate: fast
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: serrate
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); obovate
Leaf venation: pinnate; reticulate
Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green; purple or red
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: < .5 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: black; red
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; 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; reddish
Current year twig thickness: medium
Growing best in full sun on moist, organic soils, Photinia grows rapidly and is very tolerant of hard pruning.

The cultivar ‘Rubens’ has bright, bronze-red young leaves.

Propagation is by cuttings.

**Pests**

Mites, scales, aphids, and caterpillars are occasional pests but do no major damage.

**Diseases**

It is susceptible to fire blight and leaf spot which can cause serious defoliation. Be sure to locate plants in full day sun to help prevent these devastating diseases.

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**Culture**

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

**Other**

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible  
**Pest resistance:** very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

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**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Often used as a hedge or dense screen, Japanese Photinia can easily be trained into a multi-trunked small tree for patio or specimen use. It is occasionally sold as a standard, with all the branches originating from the top of a four to five-foot-tall straight trunk. Photinia does not make a good clipped hedge because it will not keep foliage on the lower branches, grows too rapidly and does not branch enough. But it will form a nice tall screen. It can be used to frame a residential street by planting properly trained specimens on 10 to 15 foot centers. Although the red foliage color contrasts well in most applications, landscape designers avoid planting it against a red brick wall because it clashes with brick.