



## *Photinia serrulata* Chinese Photinia<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

Small, white flowers arranged in dense, showy, eight-inch-diameter clusters at branch tips and large, shiny, dark green leaves combine to make Chinese Photinia an attractive evergreen for multiple landscape applications (Fig. 1). An under-used landscape tree with very showy flowers and bright red fruit. Often kept trimmed into a hedge shape, multitrunked Chinese Photinia creates an ideal small tree with the proper training, and when the lower branches are removed, the natural rounded canopy adds to its attractive silhouette. New growth is tinged pink, though not as much as *Photinia glabra*, and young twigs are red to reddish-brown. The serrate-margined leaves can reach eight inches in length and are two inches wide, and plants may reach 40 feet in height under ideal conditions but are more often seen at 15 to 20 feet. The springtime flower clusters are followed by small, red berry-like fruit clusters which persist through the winter.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Photinia serrulata*

**Pronunciation:** foe-TIN-nee-uh ser-yoo-LAY-tuh

**Common name(s):** Chinese Photinia

**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

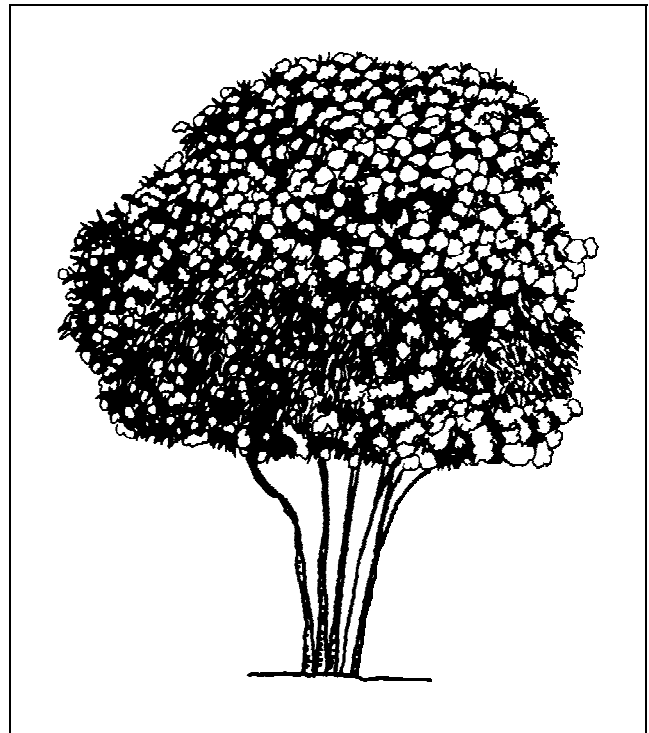


Figure 1. Middle-aged Chinese Photinia.

strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; screen; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; 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

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-443, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 25 feet

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

**Crown shape:** round; vase shape

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** serrate

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

**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:** spring flowering; summer flowering; unpleasant fragrance; very showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** red

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; 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

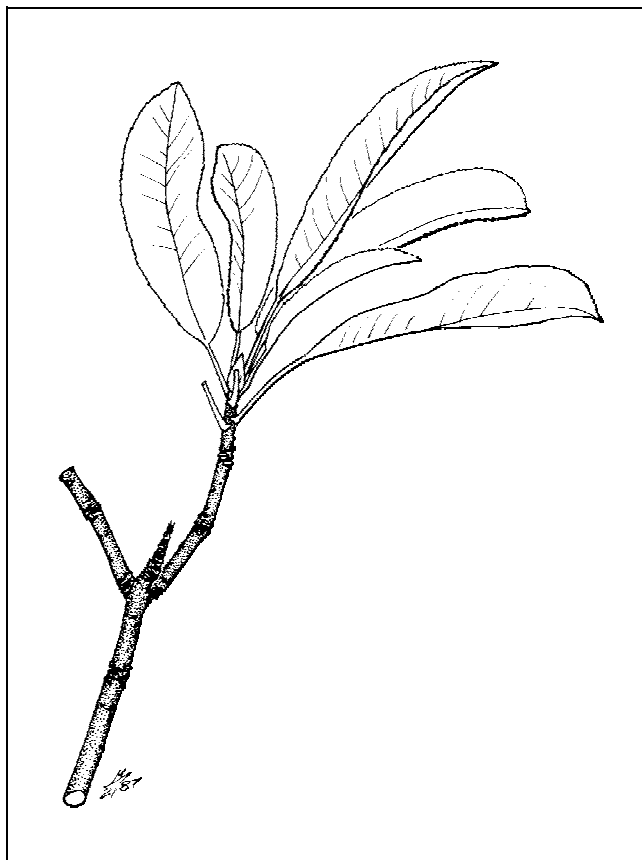


Figure 3. Foliage of Chinese Photinia.

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown; green

**Current year twig thickness:** thick

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; 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:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

Nurseries could produce trees with a single leader and market them as street trees. They stay fairly small, grow fast when young but slow down later as the crown broadens. Great for planting beneath powerlines. Prune to distribute main branches along a central trunk to increase longevity.

Chinese Photinia needs well-drained soil and a full sun location. Leaves often become infected with leaf spot fungi when grown in shade or when the leaves remain too moist. Plants grow at a moderate rate and tolerate pruning very well, although the bottom of the plant often thins when clipped into a hedge. There are much better plants for hedges, although Photinia makes a good tall screen plant. Well-adapted to sand or clay (well-drained), acid or alkaline soil, Photinia likes to be kept on the dry side and is very drought-tolerant. It is popular in all of USDA hardiness zones 7 and 8 as a highway median plant and could be used more as a multi-stemmed specimen, street or patio tree.

The cultivar 'Aculeata' has reddish young stems, more serrate leaves than the species, and reaches about 10 feet in height. 'Nova' reaches 10 feet in height with a seven to eight-foot spread. There is a hybrid between red-leaved Photinia (*Photinia glabra*) and Chinese Photinia (*Photinia serrulata*) which perhaps displays the best characteristics of both parents, called *Photinia x fraseri*. It is very popular in the nursery trade and is often used as a hedge or foundation plant, a usage which is quite inappropriate due to its large size and rapid growth rate.

Propagation is by cuttings.

### Pests

It is usually pest-free but caterpillars, mites, scales, and European fruit-tip moth are sometimes a problem.

### Diseases

Chinese Photinia is usually disease-free, except for leaf spot which can be devastating. Fire blight, and mildew in shady locations can also be troublesome.