



Prunus umbellata Flatwoods Plum¹

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INTRODUCTION

A native of the woods of the southeastern United States, Flatwoods Plum is a round-topped, deciduous tree, reaching 20 feet in height with a 15-foot spread, that is most often planted for its spectacular display of blooms (Fig. 1). It may look a little ragged in winter. In late February, before the two-inch-long, finely serrate leaves appear, these small trees take on a white, billowy, almost cloud-like appearance when they are clothed in the profuse, small, white flower clusters. These half-inch blooms are followed by one-inch-long, edible, purple fruits which vary in flavor from very tart to sweet. These plums are very attractive to various forms of wildlife.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Prunus umbellata*

Pronunciation: PROO-nus um-bell-AY-tuh

Common name(s): Flatwoods Plum

Family: *Rosaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 8 through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: Bonsai; container or above-ground planter; 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; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

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

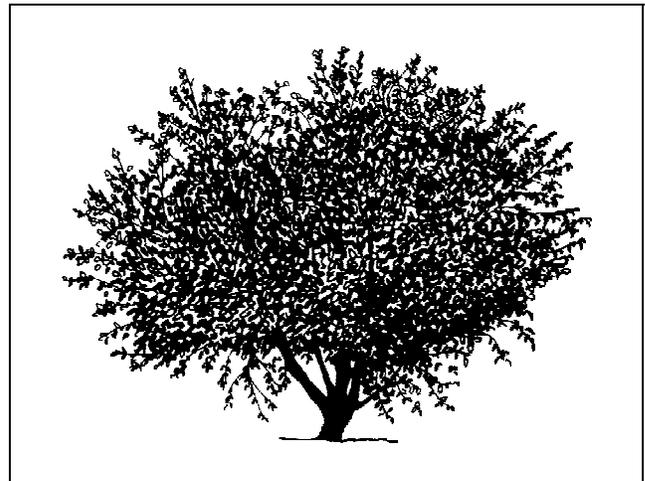


Figure 1. Mature Flatwoods Plum.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 12 to 20 feet

Spread: 12 to 20 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: round

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: medium

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate; serrulate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); ovate

Leaf venation: banchidodrome; pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: showy; spring flowering; winter flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: purple

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; 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; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a 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: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Soil salt tolerance: poor

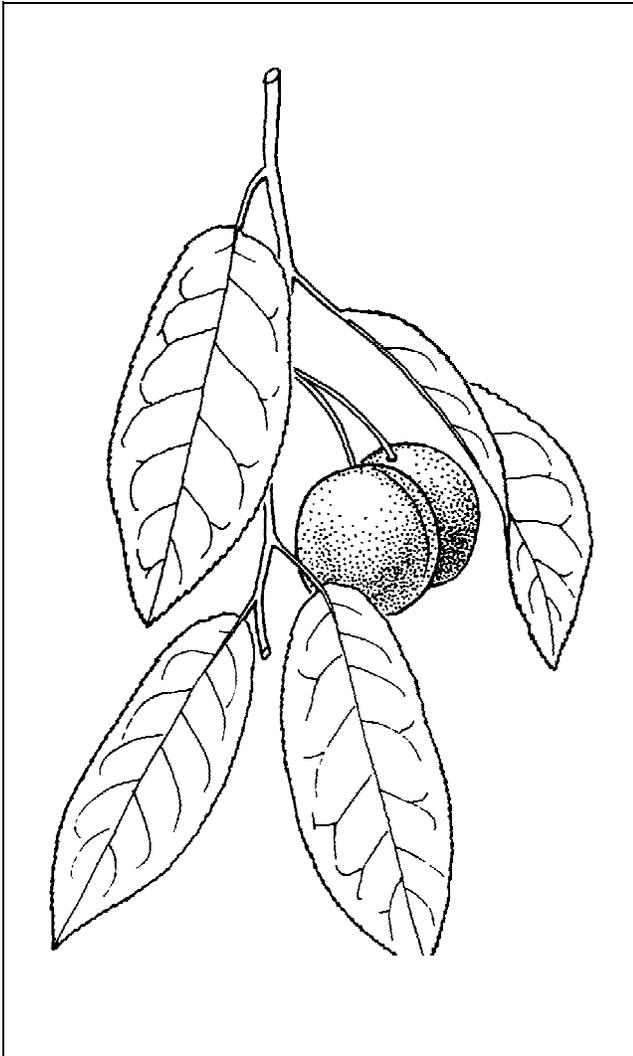


Figure 3. Foliage of Flatwoods Plum.

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

Ozone sensitivity: sensitive or moderately tolerant

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

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

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Flatwoods Plum thrives in full sun or partial shade on a wide variety of soils. When placed in sandy soil, it grows best with irrigation and some shade in the afternoon. Trees grow quickly when young but considerably slower when mature and bearing fruit. A bit weedy in growth habit, proper training and pruning can create an attractive specimen or small median strip

or street tree, especially for planting beneath power lines or in other areas where overhead space is limited. Few root suckers form on this plant; many form on *Prunus angustifolia*.

Do not expect a row of them to form a uniform shape. The tree branches low to the ground making it a nice tall element in a backyard shrub border. Lower branches need to be removed in order to train as a street tree. Small-diameter, interior branches can be removed in winter to open up the crown for a more formal, attractive shape and habit. May live 30 to 40-years on a good site.

Propagation is by seed which must be stratified for several months to germinate.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Tent caterpillars occasionally infest Flatwoods Plum.