**Styrax obassia**
Fragrant Snowbell

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**INTRODUCTION**

*Styrax obassia* gets its common name, Fragrant Snowbell, from the six to eight-inch-long raceme of fragrant, white, bell-shaped flowers produced May to June (Fig. 1). Fragrant Snowbell is a small, 20 to 30-foot tall, deciduous tree that is appropriate as a patio tree where the attractive bark with orange-brown vertical fissures can be appreciated at a close distance, or Fragrant Snowbell can add color to the mixed shrubbery border. The dark green leaves are not as attractive as Japanese snowbell since they are quite large (three to eight-inches-long) and somewhat hide the beauty of the flowers. For this reason alone, Japanese Snowbell is preferred between the two species. Fragrant Snowbell does not have good fall color and the fruit is insignificant.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** *Styrax obassia*
**Pronunciation:** STY-racks oh-BAY-see-uh
**Common name(s):** Fragrant Snowbell
**Family:** Styracaceae
**USDA hardiness zones:** 6 through 8A (Fig. 2)
**Origin:** not native to North America
**Uses:** near a deck or patio; reclamation plant; specimen; no proven urban tolerance
**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 20 to 30 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: oval; upright; vase shape
Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: medium
Texture: coarse

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: dentate; entire; serrate
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: banchidodrome; pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: yellow
Fall characteristic: showy

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

Fruit
Fruit shape: oval; round
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: green
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; showy

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; reddish
Current year twig thickness: thick
Styrax obassia -- Fragrant Snowbell

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; 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:** no pests are normally seen on the tree

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

*Styrax obassia* requires a well-drained, peaty, acid soil. It often grows poorly in clay or compacted soil. In colder areas (USDA hardiness zone 6), locate *Styrax obassia* in an area protected from winter winds. Some protection from full day sun is preferable in the southern part of its range. Propagate by softwood cuttings in summer.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases of major concern.