**Tabebuia impetiginosa**

Purple Tabebuia

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

**INTRODUCTION**

This briefly deciduous tree reaches 15 to 20 feet in height and has a fairly open canopy (Fig. 1). Branching is often sparse allowing turf and other sun loving plants to grow beneath the canopy. The dark green, palmately compound, five-inch-long leaves are joined in late winter or early spring by the showy, trumpet-shaped blooms, appearing in dense, rose-pink to purple, terminal panicles. Trees will have a better form if trained to a single trunk and staked until they are six to eight feet tall, at which time they can be allowed to grow naturally.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

- **Scientific name:** *Tabebuia impetiginosa*
- **Pronunciation:** tab-eh-BOO-yuh
- **Common name(s):** Purple Tabebuia
- **Family:** Bignoniaceae
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)
- **Origin:** not native to North America
- **Uses:** 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; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); 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

**DESCRIPTION**

- **Height:** 12 to 18 feet
- **Spread:** 10 to 15 feet
- **Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette
- **Crown shape:** round
- **Crown density:** open
- **Growth rate:** slow
- **Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)
- **Leaf type:** palmately compound
- **Leaflet margin:** serrate

---

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-617, 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.
Leaflet shape: elliptic (oval); oblong
Leaflet venation: banchidodrome; pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaflet blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

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

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; pod
Fruit length: 6 to 12 inches; 3 to 6 inches
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; 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: susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break
Current year twig color: brown
Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate
Pest and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

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
Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Use this small tree in an area where any small tree can be used. It might be best to locate it in a shrub border or other out-of-the-way place since the canopy is quite thin, even in full sun. It is probably not as well suited for specimen planting as the other Tabebuias.

Purple Tabebuia should be grown in full sun on almost any well-drained soil but trees respond especially well to rich soil. Established trees are highly drought-tolerant.

Propagation is by seed, cuttings, or layering.
Plants flower at an early age.