



## *Ligustrum lucidum* Glossy Privet<sup>1</sup>

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

### INTRODUCTION

This fast-growing evergreen tree, 25 to 40 feet in height (can grow larger) with a 25 to 35 foot spread, has a dense canopy of bending branches composed of large, four to six-inch-long, glossy green leaves which have narrow, translucent margins (Fig. 1). Terminal, 6 to 10-inch-long, eye-catching panicles of small, white, malodorous flowers are produced in late spring in the south and summer in the north. These blooms are followed in fall by large, showy clusters of small purple berries. The berries are popular with birds and the dispersed seeds germinate in the landscape and could become somewhat of a nuisance. Care must be taken in the location of this multitrunked tree since the profuse berry production can create a litter problem on hard surfaces. The fallen berries may stain car paint, walks, and patios.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Ligustrum lucidum*

**Pronunciation:** lih-GUS-trum LOO-sih-dum

**Common name(s):** Glossy Privet, Tree Ligustrum

**Family:** *Oleaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8 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 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; shade tree; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree; tree has been

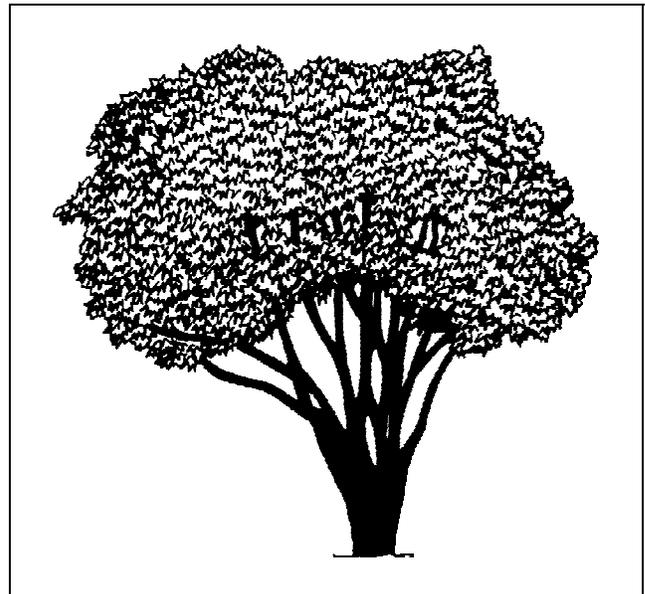


Figure 1. Mature Glossy Privet.

successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 25 to 40 feet

**Spread:** 25 to 35 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

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** lanceolate; ovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** broadleaf evergreen; evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** showy; summer flowering; unpleasant fragrance

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval; round

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** blue; purple

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree; showy

### 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; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

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

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

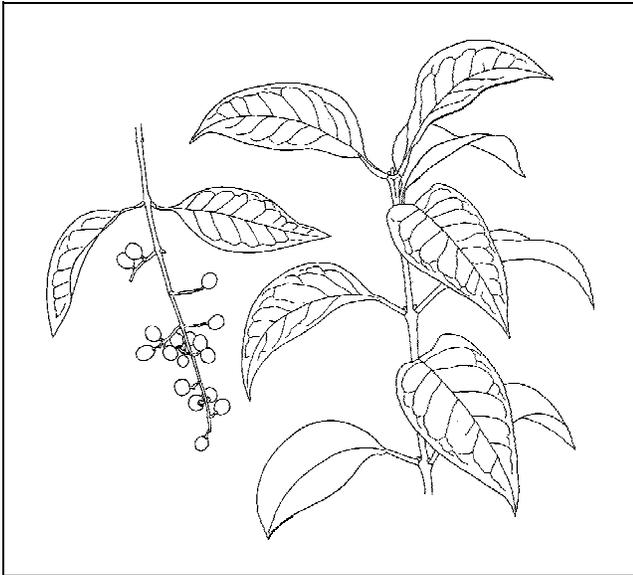


Figure 3. Foliage of Glossy Privet.

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun;  
tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline;  
well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt 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:** not particularly outstanding

**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

When growing on to a tree sized plant, be sure not to purchase those which were trained as a standard. These often have all branches originating from the same spot on the trunk, and are not well formed for longevity in the landscape. Trees trained as standards are high-maintenance plants since they should be kept in this form and size for their entire life. Most nurseries grow Tree Ligustrum with several trunks originating close to the ground. They spread out from each other as they ascend into the rounded, vase-shaped canopy. These can be planted as street trees if

lower branches are periodically removed when the tree is young.

Showing quick growth while young but slowing with age, Tree Ligustrum will grow in full sun or partial shade on various soil types, and is moderately salt-tolerant. The tree seems to thrive on neglect and is used along highways (unirrigated) as a screen for headlights. Clay soil and high pH do not seem to cause any problems as long as water drains away from the roots. Plant it as a street tree along boulevards where regular mowing will kill germinating seedlings and in locations where overhead space is limited. Mature specimens will require only light pruning to maintain shape and remove dead wood.

Many cultivars are available: 'Compactum' has dense leaves of dark, waxy green; 'Davidson Hardy' is exceptionally hardy (to minus-15-degrees F.) and has excellent foliage, becoming available in the trade; 'Gracile' has closely-spaced erect branches; 'Macrophyllum' has large leaves while 'Microphyllum' has small leaves; 'Nigrifolium' has very dark green leaves; 'Nobile' has branches which are strongly ascending and fastigate; 'Pyramidale' is narrowly conical in form; 'Recurvifolium' has recurved leaf margins; 'Repandum' has narrow leaves with waxy edges; and 'Tricolor' has leaves variegated with yellow and are pink when young.

Propagation is by seeds or grafting of cultivars. Plants are often grafted onto *L. quihoui* since Tree Ligustrum is resistant to propagation by cuttings. The abundant seedlings found under old trees can be transplanted and used as they are or as grafting stock.

### Pests

Scales, white-flies, sooty-mold, and nematodes are problems but not serious.

### Diseases

Root rot can be a problem in wet soil.