



Gordonia lasianthus Loblolly-Bay¹

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INTRODUCTION

A native American, usually single-trunked, evergreen tree, Loblolly-Bay reaches a height of 35 to 60 feet with a columnar or pyramidal, very open growth habit (Fig. 1). The two to seven-inch-long, glossy, dark green leaves are a light grey color on the underside, giving a two-toned effect in the wind. Although evergreen, several individual leaves at a time will turn a brilliant scarlet color in the fall adding to its attractiveness. The white, two to three-inch-wide, five-petaled, cup-shaped flowers open from late spring through summer and are very attractive but sparsely produced throughout the canopy.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Gordonia lasianthus*

Pronunciation: gor-DOE-nee-uh lay-zee-ANTH-us

Common name(s): Loblolly-Bay, Sweet-Bay

Family: *Theaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: espalier; reclamation plant; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

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

DESCRIPTION

Height: 35 to 60 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

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

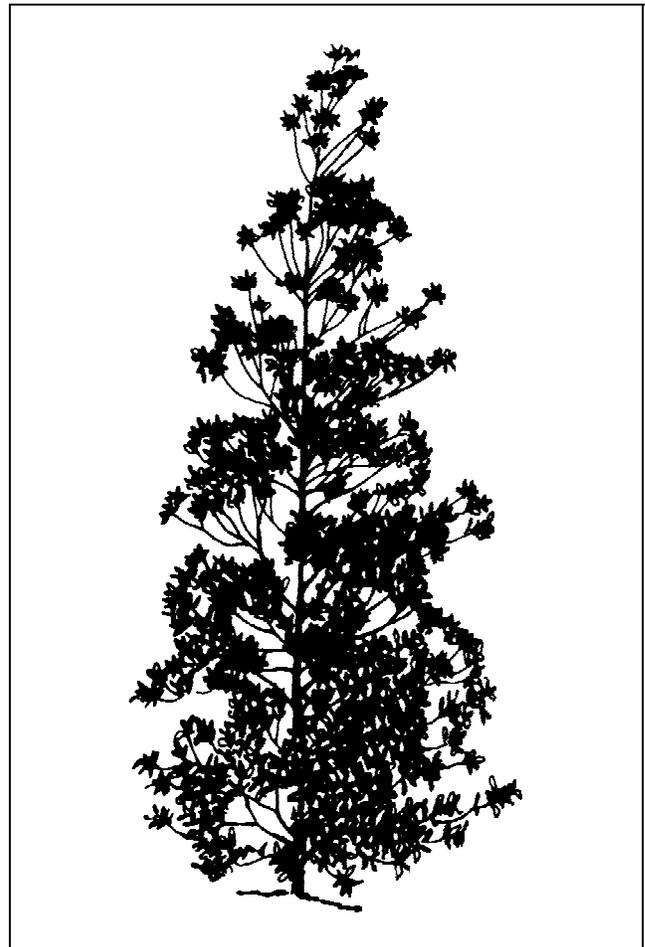


Figure 1. Middle-aged Loblolly-Bay.

Crown shape: columnar

Crown density: open

Growth rate: medium

Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrulate

Leaf shape: oblong; oblanceolate

Leaf venation: banchidodrome; pinnate; reticulate

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: red

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: spring flowering; summer flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: < .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; grow mostly upright and will not droop; 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; green

Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

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

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; acidic; extended flooding

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

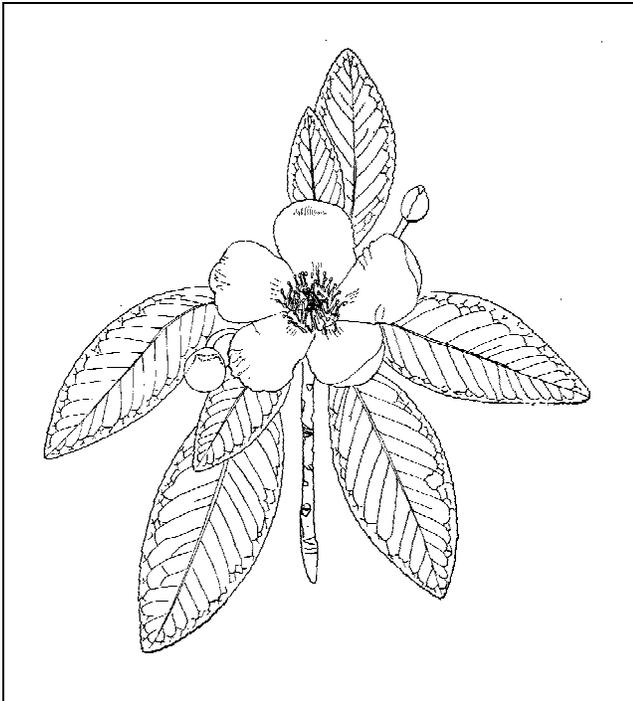


Figure 3. Foliage of Loblolly-Bay.

Propagation is by seeds which germinate well after stratification, or by cuttings.

The cultivar 'Variegata' has white and green foliage, white flowers.

Pests

Pest problems are borers in weakened trees, aphids, and caterpillars.

Diseases

No 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

Loblolly-Bay makes an attractive specimen planting and its light, airy growth habit lends itself well to smaller, partially enclosed locations. In moist soils, Loblolly-Bay naturalizes well and is well-suited to the low-maintenance landscape. Due to the shape of the crown, it makes a suitable tree in urban areas with restricted, narrow overhead space, and should do well as a street tree, although it has not been extensively used yet.

Preferring partial shade and moist soil, Loblolly-Bay can tolerate full sun only with sufficient moisture. Loblolly-Bay has a shallow root system and will die if not watered during periods of drought. It is found in the wild most often growing in wet sites in the shade of maples, cypress and pines. It is well-suited for planting in boggy and other poorly drained soils. It is not salt-tolerant. Not for dry climates.