



# *Nyssa ogeche* Ogeechee Tupelo<sup>1</sup>

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

## INTRODUCTION

First discovered by William Bartram along the Ogeechee River in Georgia, Ogeechee-Lime is a lovely native tree which reaches 40 feet in height and is pyramidal when young, maturing to a spreading, flat-topped crown (Fig. 1). The multiple, irregular branches emerge from a trunk covered with dark brown or grey, ridged bark, and the base of the tree often develops swollen buttress-type roots as it gets older. The four to six-inch-long, dark green leaves are joined in early spring by dense, hanging clusters of small, white blooms. The 1.5-inch-long, showy red fruits on female trees are produced in abundance and ripen in autumn. The juice can be used as a substitute for limes, hence its common name. Fruits can make a slight mess of a sidewalk, driveway or patio. In autumn the trees put on a brilliant display of colorful foliage ranging from vivid yellow to deep purple, which would make Ogeechee-Lime a popular landscape choice. Unfortunately, it is usually not grown by many nurseries.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Nyssa ogeche*

**Pronunciation:** NISS-uh oh-GEE-chee

**Common name(s):** Ogeechee Tupelo,  
Ogeechee-Lime

**Family:** *Nyssaceae*

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

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** 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

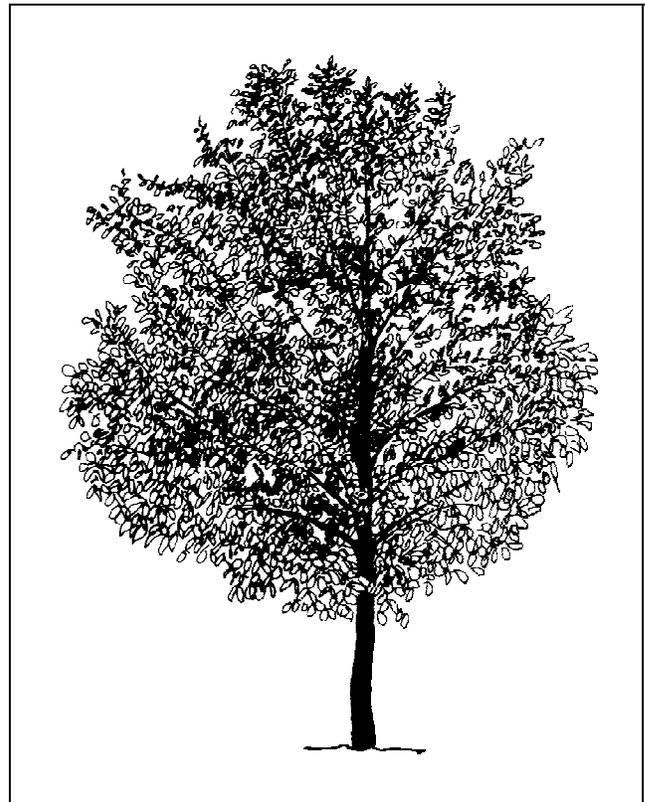


Figure 1. Middle-aged Ogeechee Tupelo.

strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; reclamation plant; shade tree; specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-420, 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.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 35 to 45 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  
**Crown density:** moderate  
**Growth rate:** medium  
**Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** entire; sinuate; undulate  
**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); obovate  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** orange; purple; red; yellow  
**Fall characteristic:** showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white; yellow  
**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** round  
**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** red  
**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; showy trunk; 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:** green  
**Current year twig thickness:** medium

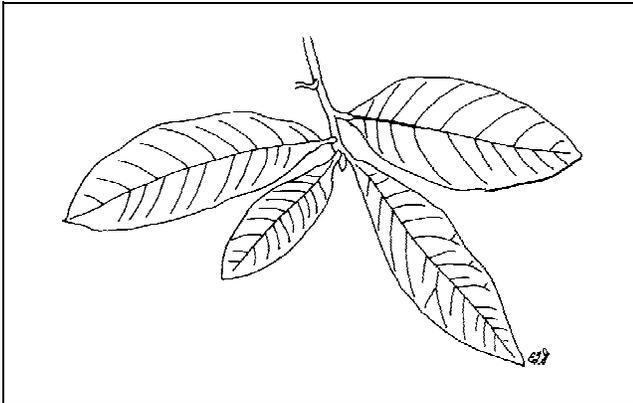


Figure 3. Foliage of Ogeechee Tupelo.

**Wood specific gravity:** 0.46

### Culture

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

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

**Drought tolerance:** high

### 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

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

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

Since the sex on trees can be determined at an early age in the nursery, it should be easy to select male trees. Those may be preferable since the fruits on female trees can be somewhat messy on pavement and walks.

Since it is most often found along streams and in low-lying areas which are regularly flooded in spring and winter, Ogeechee-Lime will prefer a moist site on acid soil. It is well-adapted to sites which are wet for prolonged periods, once the tree becomes established. Located in full sun or partial shade, Ogeechee-Lime will easily adapt to somewhat drier locations but should be protected from harsh winds. A male selection would be useful for urban areas since it would not produce fruit.

*Nyssa aquatica* is very similar and difficult to differentiate from *Nyssa ogeche*.

Propagation is by seed.

### Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern but it is occasionally bothered by tupelo leaf miner, scale, rust, and leaf spot.