



## *Prunus angustifolia* Chickasaw Plum<sup>1</sup>

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

### INTRODUCTION

Growing 25 feet tall and wide, Chickasaw Plum forms a rounded mass of slender, thorny branches sprouting from a short trunk (Fig. 1). In spring, before the one to two-inch-long leaves appear, Chickasaw Plum is festooned with small, white, fragrant flowers which make the trees quite decorative in the presence of other trees which are often still dormant. The 0.5-inch-diameter fruits which follow are red, ripening to yellow, and are extremely popular with wildlife and man. The plums are either eaten fresh or used to make a delicious jelly.

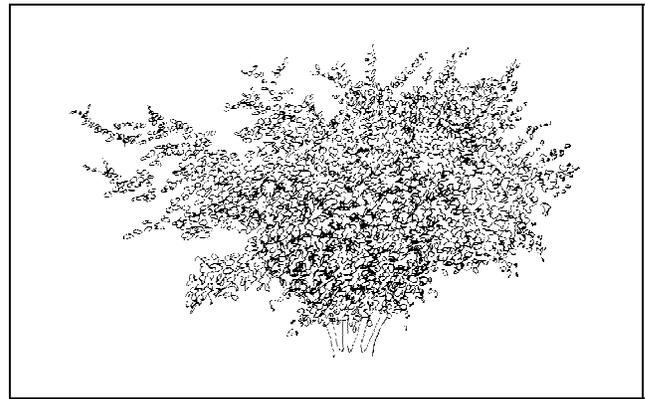


Figure 1. Young Chickasaw Plum.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Prunus angustifolia*  
**Pronunciation:** PROO-nus an-gus-tih-FOLE-ee-uh  
**Common name(s):** Chickasaw Plum  
**Family:** *Rosaceae*  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 6 through 9 (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** native to North America  
**Uses:** Bonsai; 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; reclamation plant; 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 20 feet  
**Spread:** 15 to 20 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette  
**Crown shape:** round  
**Crown density:** moderate  
**Growth rate:** medium  
**Texture:** fine

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** serrate; serrulate  
**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); ovate  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** pleasant fragrance; showy; winter flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** red; yellow

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; 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; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk;

thorns are present on the trunk or branches

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

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

**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:** high

**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:** seeds itself into the landscape

**Ozone sensitivity:** sensitive or moderately tolerant

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible



**Figure 3.** Foliage of Chickasaw Plum.

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

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

Grown occasionally with a single leader and used as a street tree, Chickasaw Plum is usually seen with a multiple trunk planted as a specimen or in a median strip, or planted on 15 to 25-foot-centers along the entrance road to a commercial property. It tends to sprout from the base of the trunk, forming multi-stemmed thickets. This is the form most commonly seen in its native habitat on old fields and on other disturbed sites. It makes a nice addition to the shrub border in the back yard and is well suited for planting around the patio or deck although it does not form a neat crown and looks a little unkempt during the winter. The crown often leans to one side or the other. Occasional pruning can significantly improve the form of the crown.

A North American native tree, Chickasaw Plum is very easily grown and has no special cultural requirements. It tolerates drought, sandy or clay soil but does poorly in alkaline pH. These small trees grow quickly but have a relatively short life. This should not stop you from planting the tree since it will serve the landscape well during its life.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

### Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Tent caterpillar can defoliate trees and could weaken them with repeated defoliations.