

Sweetbay Magnolia (*magnolia virginiana*)

Hardiness zones: 5b-9

Height: 10-30 feet

Spread: 8-15 feet

Flower color: white

Fall color: gold to brown

Soil moisture: wide range

Soil type: various

Light: full sun to light shade

Growth rate: medium to fast

Shape: columnar

Drought tolerance: good

The Sweetbay or swamp magnolia is native to the southeastern United States. In the mild climates of the south, the magnolia remains green all year. In the more northern areas of its range, the tree is semi-evergreen or deciduous. It may be cultivated as either a multi-stemmed shrub or tree with a columnar shape (see below).



The Sweetbay Magnolia is prized for its proliferation of fragrant white blooms.



Shrub form Sweetbay Magnolia

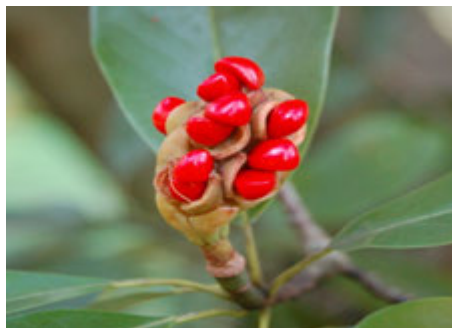


Tree form Sweetbay Magnolia

The bark of the Sweetbay is smooth and gray with a mild bay laurel scent. Leaves are a dark shiny green with a silver underside that gives them a frosted appearance (below left). The bright scarlet-red seeded fruit that ripens during late summer provides a fall food source for birds (below center). The magnolia is best known for its 2"-3" creamy white flowers (below right) which bloom from mid-May through early summer and produce a light lemon scent.



Silvery underside of the Sweetbay leaf



Sweetbay magnolia seeded fruit



Trademark lemon scented blossoms

While the Sweetbay is not known for its vivid fall colors (right), it does produce shade during the summer months. It is also one of the most pest resistant varieties of magnolia and is able to withstand typical Missouri ice storms with minimal damage.

The Sweetbay Magnolia is elegantly shaped and makes an excellent choice for a specimen tree. It prefers moist, acidic soil with sun to partial shade. Depending upon pruning methods used, it reaches a height of 10' to 30'.

Golden brown fall colors (right)

