

Carolina Silverbell

Halesia carolina (formerly *H. tetraptera*)

Alex X. Niemiera, Associate Professor, Department of Horticulture

Summary:

Foliage: About 4 inch long oval or elliptic leaf; deciduous

Height: About 35 feet

Spread: About 25 feet

Shape: Round to oval

Main features: Carolina silverbell is a medium sized tree with a very showy display of bell-shaped white flowers in April. Brown four-winged fruits are persistent into the fall that are considered aesthetically pleasing by some; at the least they are interesting and an aid in plant identification. The bark as well is not outwardly showy but has a brown-gray- black tones in lustrous scaly vertical plates that is interesting (or attractive to bark enthusiasts). In its native haunts this species is an understory tree; thus, it will tolerate shade. Balled-and-burlapped plants are reported to have low transplant success, hence container-grown plants are recommended.

Plant Needs:

Zone: 4 to 8

Light: Full sun to full shade

Moisture: Moist to average

Soil type: Well-drained with ample organic matter

pH range: Acid

Functions:

Carolina silverbell is certainly worthy as a specimen tree. It is especially useful dotted throughout woodland settings. Planting this species in front of a dark background (dark-leaved conifer or broad-leaved evergreen) will increase the brightness of the white flowers.

Care:

Other than supplying this species with a good soil, no special care is needed.

Additional Information:

There are a few pink-flowered cultivars in the trade of which 'Rosy Ridge' is reported to be one of the best. 'Wedding Bells' has larger flowers than the species; apparently this cultivar is not as large as the species (to 20 feet tall). Two-winged silverbell (*Halesia diptera*) is a small tree (marginally medium) that is similar to Carolina silverbell but is typically smaller, flowers one to two weeks later than Carolina silverbell, and has fruits with two wings instead of four. The variety *magniflora* has larger flowers than the species and is very showy in flower. This species is not typically found at garden centers but is well worth the hunt.