

White Fringetree, Old-man's-beard *Chionanthus virginicus*

Alex X. Niemiera, Associate Professor, Department of Horticulture

Summary:

Foliage: About 5 inch long elliptic leaves; deciduous

Height: About 12 feet tall

Spread: About 12 feet wide

Shape: Large shrub/small tree form that varies with individual; form ranges from bushy to more open to more tree-like

Main features: White fringetree is a slow-growing large shrub or small tree (depending on how and if one prunes it) with a very showy display of fleecy white flowers in late April/early May.

Female plants bear pendulous clusters of dark blue fruit that are nice upon close inspection.

This species is quite tough and tolerates drought as well as wet soils; will grow in full sun or part shade.

Plant Needs:

Zone: 4 to 9

Light: Full sun to part shade

Moisture: Wet to dry

Soil type: Most soils

pH range: Acid

Functions:

Fringetree is suitable as a specimen plant (due to its spectacular flower show), in borders, in mass, and any where a small deciduous tree is appropriate. Most un-pruned plants will be large shrubs; one can remove lower limbs to develop a tree form. The flower show is especially noticeable and showy when planted in front of a dark background such as dark-leaved conifers or evergreen hollies.

Care:

No special care is needed. Fringetree can be developed into a small tree form by removing lower limbs/foliage; this species will be shrub-like (multi-stem, foliage and branches to near ground level) without pruning.

Additional Information:

A few cultivars are available in the trade. These are:

'Emerald Knight' upright form with long dark green and glossy leaves

Prodigy® rounded habit; very floriferous

'Spring Fleecing' a glossy narrow leaf form; very floriferous

Chinese fringetree, *Chionanthus retusus*, is an attractive small tree that produces very showy fleecy flowers in late April/May. Leaves are glossy and leathery; they may be roundish or elliptic depending on origin (foliage of Northern Type is elliptic and Southern Type is roundish). This species is adaptable in zones 6 to 8.