

## Adopt-a-Tree in Leon County

Stan Rosenthal is an Extension Agent with the University of Florida IFAS Extension in Leon County, <http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu> Send your gardening questions to [Ask-a-MasterGardener@leoncountyfl.gov](mailto:Ask-a-MasterGardener@leoncountyfl.gov)

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The tree selected for this year's Leon County Adopt-a-Tree Program is the large-flowered silverbell. This beautiful small flowering native tree is a good choice for many small locations.

I have seen large-flowered silverbell trees growing in our area in ravines. Ravines in this area, if undisturbed, are highly aesthetic and support a well developed hardwood forest, rich in species diversity. Under the large hardwood trees you sometimes will find silverbell trees growing in their protective shade. It is best to mimic this natural environment when planting the large-flowered silverbell in your yard. It likes rich, well-drained but moist soil where leaf litter and mulch are allowed to accumulate. While it can tolerate full sun, it is best if grown in filtered sun much like that found in the ravine forest. Use large-flowered silverbell as you would flowering dogwood, as an understory tree, in shaded borders or beneath large shade trees.

*Halesia diptera* Ellis, var. *magniflora* is its lengthy scientific name. The term *magniflora* helps differentiate this variety from the more widely distributed two winged silverbell. *Magniflora* refers to the considerably larger flowers. The showy white, bell-shaped blossoms appear in mid-spring and hang from the branches in long neat rows of pendulous pedicels. Blossoms are from three-quarters to one and a quarter inches long and have a delicate beauty about them.

Besides the showy flowers the tree has broadly oval leaves that are deciduous and turn yellow in the fall. The twigs are somewhat zig-zagging, brown in color with reddish brown buds. The bark on young trees is red-brown with white stripes, forming a rough diamond-shape pattern. On mature trees the bark develops ridges and furrows that develop into scaly plates. The tree's immature sour green fruit has two wings and like the flowers, dangle from its branches. It is consumed by a variety of wildlife, including squirrels.

If you decide you want a large-flowered silverbell, the county will plant one tree per household. The tree must be placed between your house and the road, so that it will be visible to others. To let the county know that you want a tree, Leon County Right-of-Way Management Superintendent, Tom Jackson, says to go to the County's web site at [www.leoncountyfl.gov](http://www.leoncountyfl.gov) On the lower right hand side of the web page click on County Highlights. Then click on Tis-The-Season to Adopt-A-Tree. Coupons are also available at the Leon County Public Works Center at 2280 Miccosukee Road. If you request a tree, you will need to put out a wooden stake indicating

where you want the tree planted. If there is no stake, the county planting crew will pick a good spot.

Remember, these trees should be watered regularly for the first year. Water by letting a hose thoroughly wet the tree's root ball at least three times per week unless we are receiving sufficient rainfall. Mulch will also help establish the tree and should be spread out under the tree at a depth of 2-4 inches, but keep it 4-6 inches from the trunk of the tree.

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