

## ***Chionanthus virginicus* (White Fringetree)** **Olive Family (Oleaceae)**

### **Introduction:**

White fringetree is a small tree with a spreading habit, and is often wider than it is tall. It is an excellent specimen tree as it offers lovely white flowers in May and June. Although native to the Southeastern U.S., fringetree has proved to be hardy as far north as Maine.

### **Culture:**

White fringetree is adaptable but performs best in deep, moist, fertile soils that are acidic. It prefers full sun. It is tolerant of air pollution but will not tolerate drought. It is hardy in Zones 4 to 9.

Fringetree may be bothered by scale, mites, powdery mildew, leaf spots and canker.

### **Related species:**

***Chionanthus retusus*:** Chinese fringetree usually reaches a height of 15 to 25 feet. It has leathery leaves that tend to be smaller than those of white fringetree. It has white flowers in May and June and dark blue fruit (female trees) in September and October. Male and female trees must be in the same area for fruit production. Chinese fringetree also has attractive gray bark that may be furrowed or peeling.

### **Additional information:**

Fringetree is a large shrub or small tree in the landscape, but it may reach a height of 25 to 30 feet in the wild.

When flowering, white fringetree is one of the most beautiful native trees. Flowers are borne in panicles that are 6 to 8 inches long, with three flowers on each stalk of the panicle.

Fringetree's fruit, a dark blue drupe, ripens in August and September. Foliage partially hides the fruit, which birds love to eat.

The stems of white fringetree range in color from green to brown to purple-brown.



### **Botanical Characteristics:**

**Native habitat:** Southern New Jersey, south to Florida and west to Texas.

**Growth habit:** Spreading, open habit may have a variety of shapes. May be bushy or straggly. It can be pruned to a single trunk early in its life.

**Tree size:** 12 to 20 feet tall with a similar spread.

**Flower and fruit:** White flowers are slightly fragrant and are borne in 6- to 8-inch-long panicles in May and June. Petals of male flowers are a little longer than those of female flowers. Fringetree is dioecious, with male and female flowers on separate plants, or polygamo-dioecious, with a few female flowers located on predominantly male plants and vice versa. Female plants produce dark blue fruits that ripen in August and September. Both male and female plants must be in the same area for fruit to be produced.

**Leaf:** Opposite, simple leaves are 3 to 8 inches long and half as wide. Leaves are medium to dark green in summer, then turn yellowish brown or golden yellow in fall.

**Hardiness:** Winter hardy to USDA Zone 4