

A Fragrant Addition to the Landscape

Chionanthus virginicus, the white fringetree, is a showy bloomer and one of our most beautiful native plants. It's one of the last deciduous plants to leaf out, often in late May. The elongated leaves are emerald green and may turn a fine yellow color in the fall.

A large shrub in the wild, the white fringetree can be trained with pruning into a specimen tree. It's a slow grower but will reach 12 to 20 feet in height with an equal spread and a low canopy.

In late May and early June, this under-utilized native puts on a spectacular show of loose clusters of frilly, white, lightly-scented flowers. The upright clusters are four to eight inches long. Male plants are showier than female. If a male plant is in the vicinity, in late August through September, a female white fringetree will produce bluish fruits in loose clusters, a favorite of birds.

The white fringetree does best in full sun to moderate shade, but it's amazingly adaptable, tolerating dry conditions and even some standing water. It's also tolerant of urban pollution. It can be tricky to transplant, but once it's established, the white fringetree requires very little maintenance.

Stop by the employee entrance to the Rutgers Ocean County Agricultural Extension Office to find an exquisite example of this unusual native. Visit during later May and early June for a spectacular show of gorgeous white mounds of frilly flowers and an enticing fragrance. Check it out and add a white fringetree to your landscape this spring!

Habit: Large shrub to small tree Form: Multi-stemmed, rounded, graceful
Height and Width: 12 to 20 feet Bark: Light gray-brown, slightly ridged
Culture: Full sun to partial shade Use: Accent plant or massed in groupings

Foliage: 3 to 8 inches long, medium to dark green in summer, in autumn can be a good yellow or golden color or a mix of yellow, green and brown
Flowers: 6 to 8 inch long, fleecy, loose, branching clusters, slightly fragrant

<http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/trees/hgic1027.html>

Dirr, Michael A. *Encyclopedia of Trees and Shrubs*. Timber Press, 2011.

Checklist for April

Flower and Vegetable Gardens

- ✓ Divide and transplant overcrowded perennials such as chrysanthemums, delphiniums and daylilies. Additional plants can be traded, given to friends, or moved to a new area of the garden. See Penn State Fact Sheet "**Dividing Perennials.**" <https://extension.psu.edu/dividing-perennials>
- ✓ Plant annual seeds. Thin out direct-seeded crops as they sprout.
- ✓ Deadhead wilting tulip and daffodil flowers. Continue to feed and care for the plants until the foliage has died back naturally.

Indoor Plants

- ✓ Pinch back houseplants to generate new and fuller growth as they react to the longer days and brighter light.

Trees and Shrubs

- ✓ Plant large trees and shrubs by the end of the month, before the weather becomes too warm. See Rutgers Fact Sheet "**Transplanting Trees and Shrubs.**" <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.php?pid=FS376>

Lawn

- ✓ Sharpen lawnmower blade to prevent tearing grass tips. Set it at 2½-3 inches. Leave clippings on lawn.