

Flowering Trees of Central Florida

John Roberts, Extension Agent I, Residential Horticulture

Fact Sheet

Residential Horticulture - 029

UF/IFAS Extension Orange County

Why Flowering Trees?

Most trees, like pines, oaks, elms, hickories, ashes, and maples, produce relatively inconspicuous flowers. If you have room for another tree and want to add a splash of seasonal color, there are many options at your disposal in Central Florida. These trees also give a sense of seasonality in an environment that is relatively verdant throughout most of the year.

Where Temperate Meets Tropic

The climate of Central Florida presents an interesting problem for those seeking to liven their landscapes with flowering plants – the location is juxtaposed between temperate and tropical climates. In USDA Hardiness Zone 9b, it is just cold enough for frosts to remove most tropical flowering trees from consideration, but too warm and physiologically stressful for most of the intense flowering species used throughout the rest of the country. When people think of temperate flowering trees, it is the cherries, pears, crabapples, and other members of the rose family that tend to come to mind. In 9b, some of their relatives like flatwoods plum and Carolina laurel-cherry are still potential candidates for landscaping, but the cold-hardest members of the tropics are often all that can be used here without heavy wind or frost protection.

Flowers Don't Last Forever





Seasonality of flowering is highly linked to plant origin. Plants from temperate areas will usually begin flowering in the spring. Plants from more tropical origins often have more varied seasonality to their flowering dates. Many tropical and subtropical area are divided by wet and dry seasons, and Florida is no exception here. However, flower duration varies highly from species to species. For example, loblolly-bays and magnolias flower through most of the summer and even into fall, but the golden raintree typically only flowers for a couple of weeks in September.





Florida Native vs. Colorful Outsiders





Most Florida native trees that produce flowers are not particularly colorful, which can be problematic. However, loblolly-bay, magnolias, flatwoods plum, Chickasaw plum, and Carolina laurel-cherry can provide some options for native gardens and landscapes. For those open to non-natives, many more options based on tree size, color, and flowering interval are available. Invasiveness is also a heavy consideration. Many trees that are invasive but already established in Florida's environment are frequent flowerers and have therefore been provided in this list. This is not an advocacy for their horticultural use but a call to attention for their identification.




A Tree for Every Need





Landscape architects draw heavily on principles of design, which emphasize size, texture, uniformity, contrast, and color. An aesthetically pleasing landscape does not require huge amounts of color, but when used correctly, can create stunning effects. The trees listed below can help with plant goals, horticultural endeavors, and landscaping pursuits.




Species	Common Name(s)	Image	Max. Height	Max. Spread	Native Range	Flower Description	Flowering Dates	Notes
<i>Bauhinia x blakeana</i>	Hong Kong Orchid Tree		45'	30'	SE Asia	3-5" long, fragrant, purplish to with, appears orchid-like and emerges in clusters at branch tips	Winter	Can be susceptible to cold damage; there are many species of orchid trees but the Hong Kong orchid tree is a sterile hybrid that does not drop pods and is therefore unlikely to become invasive
<i>Ceiba speciosa</i>	Silk-Floss Tree		50'	55'	Brazil and Argentina	Pink and White, ~4" wide, occur in clusters at ends of branches	Late fall to early winter	Spectacular when in bloom; often has a spiny trunk
<i>Clerodendrum quadriloculare</i>	Starburst Clerodendrum; Bronze-leaved Clerodendrum		20'	15'	New Guinea and the Philippines	Showy; clusters are the tips of shoots; each inflorescence contains many flowers with a slender pink tube about 3" long, each terminated by five slender white, reflexed corolla lobes about 1/2" long	Late winter	Spreads easily via belowground root suckers
<i>Gordonia lasianthus</i>	Loblolly-bay		60'	20'	Coastal plain of SE United States	1-3" wide, showy, white, occur singly in leaf axils at the ends of branches	Late spring through summer	Native


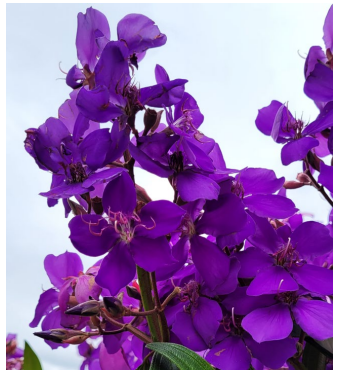

Species	Common Name(s)	Image	Max. Height	Max. Spread	Native Range	Flower Description	Flowering Dates	Notes
<i>Grevillia robusta</i>	Silk-Oak		75'	35'	Eastern coast of Australia	showy, yellow-orange, appear at one side of racemes on branches	Late spring to early summer	Not recommended near structures; not particularly long-lived
<i>Handroanthus chrysotrichus</i>	Golden Trumpet Tree		25'	35'	Brazil and N. Argentina	2" long, bright yellow, trumpet-shaped, emerges at clusters at the ends of branches	Early spring	—
<i>Jatropha integerrima</i>	Peregrina, Fire-cracker		15'	15'	Cuba	1" wide, bright red or pink, and emerges in clusters on terminal cymes	Year-round	Cold sensitive; all parts are poisonous; shade tolerant
<i>Koelreuteria elegans</i>	Golden Raintree		40'	40'	E Asia	Yellow, occur on 12-15" panicles	Late August - September	Showy, pinkish, seedpods remain on tree from October through November

Species	Common Name(s)	Image	Max. Height	Max. Spread	Native Range	Flower Description	Flowering Dates	Notes
<i>Lagerstroemia indica</i>	Crapemyrtle		30'	25'	Asia through N. Australia	Small crinkled appearance; occur on 8-10" panicles; colors range from white, red, pink, and purple	Late spring through summer	Size and color highly dependent on cultivar
<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	Southern Magnolia		80'	40'	SE United States	6-8" wide, creamy white, fragrant, and saucer-shaped	Primarily spring and summer	Native; many cultivars available
<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>	Sweetbay Magnolia		90'	30'	Gulf and Atlantic Coastal Plains (E. Texas to New York)	5-7.5" wide; white flowers are borne singly at the end of branches	April to July	Native
<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i>	Melaleuca		100'	30'	Australia, New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands	1-3" long, white has musty fragrance, and emerges in clusters on spikes that resemble a bottle brush	Primarily spring and summer	Invasive

Species	Common Name(s)	Image	Max. Height	Max. Spread	Native Range	Flower Description	Flowering Dates	Notes
<i>Melaleuca viminalis</i>	Bottlebrush Tree		20'	20'	Eastern coast of Australia	Small, with numerous bright red cylindrical stamens, and emerges in clusters 3-5" long spike that resemble a bottlebrush	Spring to early winter	Hardy to urban environments but not particularly long-lived
<i>Melia azedarach</i>	Chinaberry		40'	25'	0.5-1" across, lavender or purplish, fragrant, and emerges in clusters on 8" long, branched panicles	India, China, and the Himalayas	Spring	Invasive; fruit are poisonous; high-quality timber
<i>Myrcianthes fragrans</i>	Simpson's Stopper		30'	20'	Florida and much of the Caribbean Basin	Small, white, fragrant, and emerges in clusters on long-stalked cymes	Spring into summer	Native

Species	Common Name(s)	Image	Max. Height	Max. Spread	Native Range	Flower Description	Flowering Dates	Notes
<i>Nerium oleander</i>	Oleander		18'	15'	SE Asia to the Mediterranean	1-2"; white, yellow, pink, red, or purple (but mostly seen in the landscape as pink); emerges in clusters on terminal cyme	Mainly spring and fall but flowers year-round	All parts of plant are poisonous
<i>Peltophorum dubium</i>	Yellow Poinciana		50'	50'	N Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay	Showy, fragrant, yellow flowers on 1-1.5' panicles	Mid-summer	Similar in appearance to <i>Peltophorum pterocarpum</i>
<i>Plumeria sp.</i>	Frangipani; Plumeria		25'	25'	Central America, N. South America, and the Caribbean Basin	Showy; fragrant; pinwheel-shaped; waxy; appear in clusters along terminal cymes; occurs in pink, red, yellow, orange, and white	Late winter to early spring	Susceptible to cold damage
<i>Prunus angustifolia</i>	Chickasaw Plum		20'	20'	Southeastern US	1/3" wide, white, fragrant, and emerges singularly or in dense clusters	Late winter to early spring	Native; multi-stemmed and often forms thickets

Species	Common Name(s)	Image	Max. Height	Max. Spread	Native Range	Flower Description	Flowering Dates	Notes
<i>Prunus caroliniana</i>	Carolina Laurel Cherry		40'	25'	Southeastern US	Small, white, fragrant, and emerges on 2-3" long racemes	Winter	Native; often forms thickets
<i>Prunus umbellata</i>	Flatwoods Plum		20'	20'	Southeastern US	1/3" wide, white, fragrant, and emerges singularly or in dense clusters	Late winter to early spring	Native; multi-stemmed and often forms thickets; forms less root suckers than <i>Prunus angustifolia</i>
<i>Tabebuia aurea</i>	Silver Trumpet Tree		25'	15'	South America	2.5" wide, bright yellow, trumpet-shaped, emerges at clusters at the ends of branches	Spring	—

Species	Common Name(s)	Image	Max. Height	Max. Spread	Native Range	Flower Description	Flowering Dates	Notes
<i>Tabebuia heterophylla</i>	Pink Trumpet Tree		30'	25'	Caribbean basin	3" long, showy, pink to white, appear on clusters at end of branches	Spring to early summer	—
<i>Tibouchina urvilleana</i>	Princess Flower		15'	15'	Brazil	5" wide, purple, and emerges on terminal panicles	Primarily May-January	Invasive; can spread via belowground root suckers
<i>Tipuana tipu</i>	Tipu; Rosewood; Pride of Bolivia		90'	60'	Bolivia, Brazil	Yellow; form loosely apart and spread along terminal and axillary racemes that are 4.5-6" long	Late summer	—

Learn More: For more information contact John Roberts, Extension Agent II, Residential Horticulture jwr.09@ufl.edu 407-925-3801. Check out horticulture classes offered by UF/IFAS Extension Orange County at www.ocextension.eventbrite.com and read about Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ at <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>.