

***Prunus caroliniana* 'Monus': Bright 'N Tight™ Cherry-Laurel¹**

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Introduction

A dependable, easily grown, North American native, Cherry-Laurel is densely foliated with glossy, dark green, evergreen leaves and can probably reach 40 feet in height with a 25-foot spread, though it is often seen smaller when grown in the open. Cherry-Laurel will create a very dense screen or hedge with regular pruning but is also attractive when allowed to grow naturally into its upright oval, dense form. This cultivar is more compact and denser than the species. Properly trained to a central leader, the plant could make a good small to medium-sized street tree. The tree usually maintains a good central leader and small-diameter, strong lateral branches following one or two proper prunings before the tree is 8 to 10 years old. The species was widely planted in Texas until the severe drought of the early 1950s weakened them. Many of these weakened trees eventually died from borers.



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Prunus caroliniana* 'Monus': Bright 'N Tight™ Cherry-Laurel

General Information

Scientific name: *Prunus caroliniana*

Pronunciation: PROO-nus kair-oh-lin-ee-AY-nuh

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1. This document is ENH-665, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Visit the EDIS Web Site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Common name(s): Bright 'N Tight™
Cherry-Laurel, Bright 'N Tight™ Carolina
Laurelcherry

Family: *Rosaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 8A through 10A (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: weedy native

Uses: urban tolerant; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; screen; hedge; container or planter; reclamation; trained as a standard; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: oval, round

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire, serrulate

Leaf shape: oblong, lanceolate, elliptic (oval)



Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 25 to 35 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Leaf venation: pinnate, brachidodrome

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen, evergreen, fragrant

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: black

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; not showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; not showy; typically one trunk; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade, shade tolerant

Soil tolerances: sand; loam; clay; acidic; slightly alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

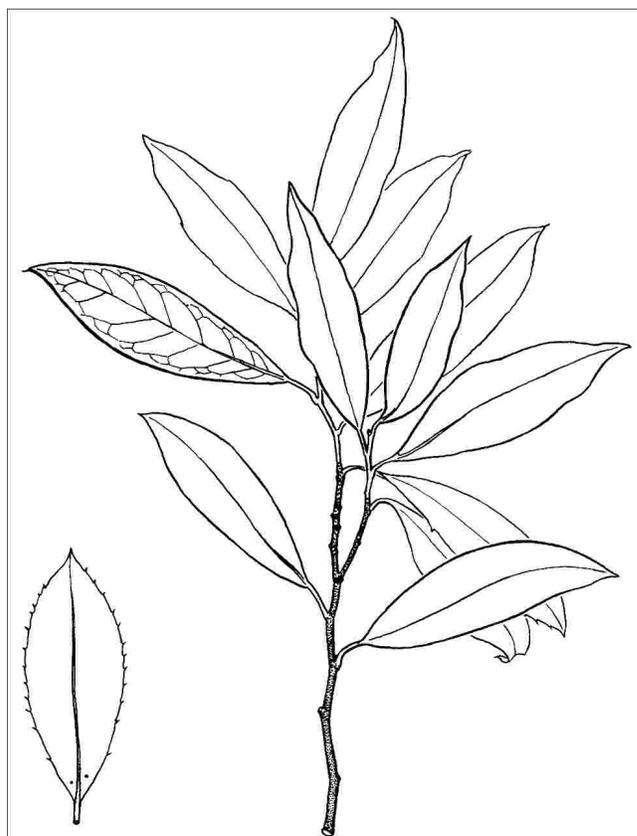


Figure 3. Foliage

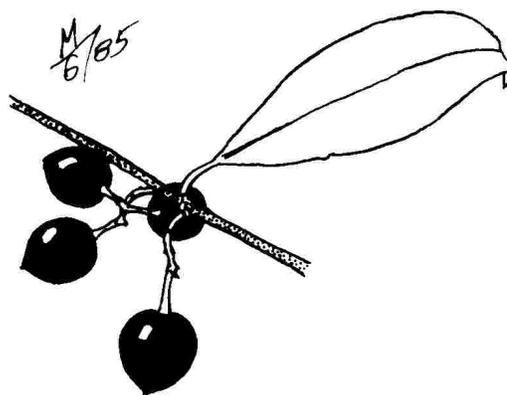


Figure 4. Fruit

Use and Management

In springtime, tiny, creamy-white showy flowers appear in dense, fragrant clusters and are followed by small, shiny, black cherries, which are quite attractive to wildlife. The flowers attract lots of bees. The great quantity of fruit may create a litter problem if the trees are located near a patio or walkway but the fruit is small and washes away quickly. The quick growth and ease of maintenance makes Cherry-Laurel ideal for naturalizing and for low maintenance gardens except that hundreds of seedlings can be found beneath the crown each year from germinating seeds. Of course, this would not be a problem in a street tree planting or in an area such as a lawn or highway median which is mowed regularly. Though the crushed leaves and green twigs of Cherry-Laurel give off a delicious maraschino cherry fragrance, they are quite bitter and possibly poisonous. Root systems are often quite shallow but usually they are not aggressive and do not cause problems.

Preferring ample moisture while young, Cherry-Laurel is otherwise well-suited to sun or shade locations on any average, well-drained soil. Once established, it is salt- and drought-tolerant, requiring little or no irrigation. Over-irrigating can cause chlorosis and decline. Do not plant in wet, soggy areas. The tree adapts well to soils with high pH. Clay soil is fine as long as water doesn't stand after it rains.

The cultivar 'Compacta' has a very dense, compact habit of growth, to about 20 feet tall.

Propagation is by cuttings.

Pests

This tree's pests include mites, borers, and caterpillars. Borers are troublesome on stressed trees.

Diseases

Leaf spot, fire-blight, and stem canker are diseases of this tree. It is difficult to grow in containers due to root rot and over-irrigation.