**Chionanthus virginicus** - White Fringetree (*Oleaceae*)

*Chionanthus virginicus* is one of the best native American flowering shrub/trees. Some consider White Fringetree to be the most beautiful tree when in bloom and believe it should replace the Flowering Dogwood as the quintessential "American Flowering Tree".

### FEATURES

**Form**
- deciduous tree or shrub
- 10-20' tall x 10-20' wide
- spreading, open habit
- variable shapes
- commonly multi-trunked, but can be pruned into single stem form
- slow rate of growth

**Culture**
- best in sandy loam, slightly acidic soil in a sunny site, with afternoon shade
- will also grow in partial shade
- roots must be kept cool with appropriate mulching
- somewhat adaptable to other soil conditions except alkalinity and drought (tolerates city conditions)
- propagated by seed and, with difficulty, from rooted cuttings
- limited availability, B&B

**Foliage**
- opposite, simple
- entire
- coarse
- narrow elliptic and with a pointy tip
- 3-5" long x variable width
- medium green
- downy, especially on the veins
- leaves emerge later in the spring than those of most plants
- autumn color yellow to brown

**Flowers**
- dioecious (male and female plants)
- white, before the foliage
- pleasant fragrance
- loose drooping panicles, 6-8" long
- late May, on old wood
- male flowers more attractive

**Fruits**
- dark blue berry
- egg-shaped, 0.5" long
- effective in Sept.

**Twigs**
- stout, often thickened between the nodes
- green to bluff-brown
- slightly squarish
- onion-skin like bark
- stems marked by dark lenticels

**Trunk**
- starts gray, smooth and becomes slightly ridged and furrowed
- bark is thin and easily damaged by mechanical impact

### USAGE

**Function**
- specimen, near large buildings
- group in border plantings
- excellent in borders
- best against a dark background
- also good for naturalizing

**Texture**
- medium texture in foliage and when bare
- moderate density in foliage and when bare

**Assets**
- outstanding floral display

**Liabilities**
- slow growth
- some damage from scales and mites as well as leaf spots, powdery mildew, and canker

**Habitat**
- Zones 3 to 9
- Native to Eastern U.S., New Jersey to Florida and Texas

### SELECTIONS

**Alternates**
- other spring-flowering trees (e.g. *Cercis canadensis*, *Cornus florida*, *Crataegus*, *Malus*, etc.)

**Cultivars – Variants – Related species**
- the straight species is the main form available
- *Chionanthus retusus* - Chinese Fringe Tree - similar to, but eventually larger than White Fringe tree except that the flowers appear at the end of a shoot growth flush in the spring (with leaves)
- Hardiness Zones: 5 to 8
- Height: 20' Spread: 20' Form: rounded

*Chinese Fringe Tree* grows best in a sunny location. The white flowers appear in late spring or early summer. May not be as hardy. The bark is also ornamental and provides winter interest.