

# Fringe trees are finding new homes in urban landscapes

May 4 2012, By Kathy Van Mullekom, Daily Press (Newport News, Va.)

---

It's a little tree with big personality - fringe tree, or *Chionanthus virginicus*.

With its masses of lacy white flowers in spring, fringe tree forces you to stop and enjoy its beauty.

"One of the last [trees](#) to bear new leaves in spring, this tree appears dead until the leaves and flowers appear," says Helen Hamilton, past president of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society.

The tree's panicles of creamy white fragrant flowers, which are soft to the touch, also inspire its other nickname - old man's beard. Hmm, it could be the perfect memorial to a bearded grandfather or uncle you loved so much and lost.

In Virginia, fringe tree is being planted along the narrow medians of city streets because more urban landscapers realize native plants require less maintenance. Plus, its small size means it won't have to be replaced in 20 to 30 years, like so many of the larger trees municipalities tend to place in tight spaces. It also tolerates the [air pollution](#) that is so common to city landscapes.

Fringe tree, cold hardy in zones 3-9, is also considered a multi-season specimen because its dark green summer leaves turn golden in fall. Mid-summer, female trees form dark blue, olive-like fruits that birds and other small wildlife like to devour.

Slowly reaching 12 to 20 feet tall and wide, the tree grows as a small tree or large shrub and flowers at an early age. Usually it has a single trunk that features reddish-brown bark. Give it loose, moist, acidic and well-drained soil and a site that's sun to partial shade; in hot climates, afternoon shade is welcomed.

Native plants like fringe tree are best bought at independent garden centers and at plant sales sponsored by botanical gardens and native plant societies. Specialty mail-order sites like Forest Farm, [www.forestfarm.com](http://www.forestfarm.com), and Fairweather Gardens, [www.fairweathergardens.com](http://www.fairweathergardens.com), also carry it.

(c)2012 the Daily Press (Newport News, Va.)  
Distributed by MCT Information Services

Citation: Fringe trees are finding new homes in urban landscapes (2012, May 4) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-05-fringe-trees-homes-urban-landscapes.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.