

Gordonia lasianthus (L.) Ellis

loblolly-bay

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Other common names. holly-bay, gordonia, bay, tan bay, black laurel.

Growth habit, occurrence, and use. Loblolly-bay (*Gordonia lasianthus* (L.) Ellis) is a small to medium-sized evergreen tree that occurs on swampy sites on the Atlantic Coastal Plain from Albermarle Sound in North Carolina south to central Florida, with separate populations in southern Alabama and Mississippi (Gresham and Lipscomb 1990; Little 1979). This relatively slow-growing tree can attain a height of 23 m on rich sites but is shrubby on poorer ones. Although its bark was once used locally for tanning leather, loblolly-bay has little commercial value now except as an ornamental (Brown and Kirkman 1990).

Flowering and fruiting. The perfect, showy, white flowers open for 2 to 3 days in May to August; 7 to 8 cm wide, they are borne singly on long stalks in axillary clusters. Pollination is primarily by insects. The fruits are ovoid, woody capsules 12 mm in diameter and 20 mm long (figure 1); they contain from 10 to 40 small, square, winged seeds about 1.5 mm long (figure 2). The capsules turn brown as they mature in September or October, and most seeds are disseminated by wind by mid-December (Brown and Kirkman 1990; Gresham and Lipscomb 1990; Vines 1960).

Collection, extraction, and storage. Capsules should be collected when they turn brown in the fall. They can be opened with air-drying, and the seeds are then easily extracted by shaking. There are 264,550 to 332,895 dry seeds/kg (120,000 to 151,000/lb) (Gresham and Lipscomb 1990). No storage data are available for this species, but the nature of the seeds suggests that they are orthodox and can be stored easily at low temperatures and low seed moisture contents.

Germination and nursery practices. Loblolly-bay seeds have no dormancy and will germinate readily when sown (Dirr and Heuser 1987). There are no published recommendations for germination testing, but the ease of germination suggests that the common alternating regime of 20/30 °C would suffice. Germination of 70 to 80% within 10 days in petri dishes in sunlight has been reported (Gresham and Lipscomb 1990). Germination is epigeal. This species is also very easy to propagate vegetatively. Cuttings taken in June through August rooted 90 to 100% in peat/perlite and mist with 3,000 ppm of IBA applied (Dirr and Heuser 1987).

Literature Cited

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- Little EL, Jr. 1979. Checklist of United States trees (native and naturalized). Agric. Handbk. 541. Washington, DC: USDA Forest Service. 375 p.
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Figure 1C *Gordonia lasianthus*, loblolly bay: capsules, $\times 1$.

Figure 2C *Gordonia lasianthus*, loblolly bay: seeds, $\times 1$.