"Favorite Flowers of the Chesapeake Master Gardeners"

Stewartia malacodendron by Linda Bradley

Common names: Virginia Stewartia, Silky Camellia
Family: Theaceae (tea family)

Seeing the Virginia Stewartia in bloom is always a high point when hiking at the Chesapeake Arboretum, Oak Grove Park, or the Northwest River Park. Though non-fragrant, it is a breathtaking, showstopper plant. It blooms in late spring with pure white 2-3" flowers. Its crinkled petals surround abundant purple stamens and striking blue pollen.

Form: Deciduous, understory, large shrub or small tree to 20 ft. tall; Leaves are alternate, simple, 2-4" long, finely toothed.

Habitat: Prefers moist, well-drained, slightly acidic soil, light shade to part sun, moist forests, coastal plain, Native to Virginia to Texas, zones 7-9.

Propagation: One can propagate from seed using warm and cold stratification, or from cuttings (see Richard E. Bir's book on propagation). It can take several attempts to grow this wonderful plant but is well worth the effort.

Photos by Linda Bradley
For Reference:

Best Native Plants for Southern Gardens. By Gil Nelson
University Press of Florida, Gainsville, 2010, p. 93-94.
Growing & Propagating Showy Native Woody Plants, by Richard E. Bir,
The University of North Carolina Press, 1992, p. 153-154.
Native Plants of the Southeast, by Larry Mellichamp
Timber Press, Inc., 2014, p. 340.
plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/stewartia-malacodendron/

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