Calophyllum inophyllum
Beauty Leaf

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

INTRODUCTION

This upright, pyramidal, densely foliated evergreen tree can reach 60 feet in height in the forest with a 30 to 40-foot spread, but is generally much smaller because it grows slowly (Fig. 1). This is an asset in tropical landscapes, where many other plants grow so fast. Greenish, showy, 3/4-inch, very fragrant flowers are produced on eight-inch racemes in the summer. The round, yellow, 1.5-inch-wide fruit contains a single seed with a nutlike kernel that may be poisonous. The seven-inch-long, glossy, dark green, stiff, leathery leaves have numerous, distinct parallel veins at right angles to the midrib. The trunk has light grey, shallowly-ridged bark, and the wood is valued for boat building and cabinet work.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Calophyllum inophyllum
Pronunciation: kal-oh-FILL-um EYE-no-fill-um
Common name(s): Beauty Leaf
Family: Clusiaceae
USDA hardness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; espalier; hedge; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; reclamation plant; screen; shade tree; specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas

Figure 1. Middle-aged Beauty Leaf.

where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

DESCRIPTION

Height: 35 to 50 feet
Spread: 30 to 50 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: round; pyramidal
Crown density: dense
Growth rate: medium

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Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: entire  
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); oblong  
Leaf venation: pinnate  
Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen  
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: no fall color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white  
Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; showy; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round  
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches  
Fruit covering: dry or hard  
Fruit color: green  
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns  
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure  
Breakage: resistant  
Current year twig color: green  
Current year twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: No entries found.
Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Beauty Leaf makes a good specimen, street, parking lot or shade tree and is both wind and salt tolerant, making it especially useful for coastal locations. It becomes twisted and contorted when exposed to constant wind, creating an interesting specimen. Beauty Leaf is sometimes used as a tall hedge or wind break around tennis courts and similar places. It could be used more often as an urban street tree. Remember that the golfball-sized fruit is poisonous and hard and this could be undesirable in the landscape under some circumstances. The trunk grows to about two feet in diameter.

Beauty Leaf thrives in full sun or partial shade on any well-drained soil. It is not tolerant of freezing temperatures.

Propagation is by seeds or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: high

Figure 3. Foliage of Beauty Leaf.