Crataegus viridis ‘Winter King’
‘Winter King’ Southern Hawthorn

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INTRODUCTION

‘Winter King’ Southern Hawthorn is a North American native tree which slowly reaches 20 to 30 feet in height and spread (Fig. 1). It is very dense and thorny which makes it a popular choice for use as a hedge or as a screen. Unlike other Hawthorns, the thorns are small and inconspicuous. The dark green, deciduous leaves turn beautiful shades of bronze, red, and gold in the fall before dropping. The handsome, silver-grey bark peels off in sections to reveal the inner orange bark, making ‘Winter King’ Southern Hawthorn a striking specimen planting in the winter landscape. The white blooms are followed by large, orange/red fruits which persist on the naked tree throughout the winter, adding to its landscape interest. The tree was originally selected for the outstanding winter berry color. The original tree from which the cultivar was selected is about 100 years old and 25 feet tall.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Crataegus viridis ‘Winter King’
Pronunciation: kruh-TEE-gus VEER-ih-diss
Common name(s): ‘Winter King’ Southern Hawthorn, ‘Winter King’ Green Hawthorn
Family: Rosaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 7 (Fig. 2)
Origin: native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; 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); reclamation plant; screen;

DESCRIPTION

Height: 20 to 30 feet
Spread: 20 to 30 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Figure 1. Middle-aged ‘Winter King’ Southern Hawthorn.
Crown shape: round; vase shape
Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: medium
Texture: fine

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: lobed; serrate
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: white
Flower characteristics: spring flowering; very showy

Fruit
Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch; < .5 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: orange; red
Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; showy trunk; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; thorns are present on the trunk or branches
Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: brown; reddish
Current year twig thickness: medium

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

The multiple trunks and wide pyramidal to rounded shape make this adaptable tree well suited for the low maintenance landscape as a specimen. If lower branches are removed from the trunks, a more vase shape can be maintained. It has become quite popular and is available in many areas.

‘Winter King’ Southern Hawthorn should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil. It is a very adaptable tree well suited for the urban landscape. The short thorns are usually not a problem, even on trees planted near streets. It is among the best of the many Hawthorns that are available, receiving the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society’s 1992 Styer Gold Medal Award.

Transplant in the spring for best establishment.

Propagation is by grafting.

Pests

Problem pests are aphids, borers, caterpillars, and leaf miners

Diseases

It is susceptible to cedar-hawthorn rust but is more resistant than the species.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: low
Soil salt tolerance: poor

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Figure 3. Foliage of ‘Winter King’ Southern Hawthorn.