Fagus sylvatica ‘Pendula’
Weeping European Beech

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

INTRODUCTION

Weeping European Beech grows into a wide, weeping mass of green foliage, 30 to 50 feet tall and spreads 30 to 50 feet (Fig. 1). Branches normally grow up, sag to the horizontal, then sweep toward the ground in a graceful fashion. Young trees are often trained with a central leader for 10 feet or more into the crown, then the tree is allowed to weep to the ground. This can produce a tree wider than tall, or if side branches are removed, one that is tall and narrow. It grows slowly but is worth the wait. Leaves show a lustrous dark green color throughout the summer and form a very dense canopy. Some specimens have a narrow crown, others grow as wide as they are tall so allow plenty of room for growth. Not a tree for residential or other small landscapes. The branches are thin but not as flexible as those of weeping willow.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Fagus sylvatica ‘Pendula’
Pronunciation: FAY-gus sill-VAT-ih-kuh
Common name(s): Weeping European Beech
Family: Fagaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 7 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: specimen; no proven urban tolerance
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 30 to 50 feet
Spread: 30 to 60 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: weeping
Crown density: dense
Growth rate: medium
Texture: medium

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-247, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire; undulate
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); ovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: copper
Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; suited for human consumption; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; 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: requires pruning to develop strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: brown; gray
Current year twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: low
Soil salt tolerance: poor
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** not known to be susceptible

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Though not a street tree, it makes one of the finest specimens of all those available in North America for large-scale landscapes. It may be the most picturesque of all the weeping trees. It can be pruned to create a tunnel or walkway beneath the crown for pedestrians. It is probably best located in a large open area where people can enjoy it from a distance.

The tree grows slowly, is hard to transplant, and prefers a sunny location on moist, light soil. Weeping Beech is somewhat tolerant of heat and dry soil but it is best to locate it where it would receive adequate moisture. Over-watering can kill the roots due to the tree’s intolerance of low soil oxygen. Not for clay soil unless drainage is very good and not for dry climates. A rather tricky tree to grow.

**Pests**

Most problems are seen on the bark.

Aphids colonies on the lower branches can be dislodged with a strong stream of water from the garden hose. Colonies are often disposed of by predatory insects.

Borers such as flat-headed apple tree borer or two-lined chestnut borer bore into trees weakened by some stress. Prevent the insect infestations by keeping trees healthy with regular fertilization.

Regular inspections of the trunk and branches are suggested for early detection of scales. Horticultural oil sprays will help control scales.

Certain caterpillars can be controlled with sprays of *Bacillus thuringiensis*. Insect identification allows proper spray recommendations to be made.

**Diseases**

Some bark inhabiting fungi cause problems.

Several fungi cause leaf spots but are generally not serious to warrant chemical control.
Powdery mildew causes a white coating on the leaves. The disease is most common late in the season.

Bleeding canker forms cankers from which a brownish liquid oozes. Crown symptoms include leaves of smaller size and lighter green color than normal. In severe cases the leaves wilt and the branches die. Avoid feeding with high nitrogen fertilizers as it seems to worsen the condition of infected trees.

Beech bark disease occurs when the feeding site of woolly Beech scale is invaded by a fungus. The fungus kills the bark and, in the process, the insects. There are no satisfactory controls for the fungus. Control the disease by controlling the scale with a horticultural spray of oil.

Cankers infect, girdle, and kill branches. Prune out the infected branches.

During periods of high temperatures and low rainfall weeping Beech may scorch. Make sure trees are adequately watered.