**Hovenia dulcis**  
**Japanese Raisintree**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

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**INTRODUCTION**

Japanese Raisintree can reach 40 to 50 feet in height but is most often seen at 30 to 35 feet with an open, upright, oval silhouette (Fig. 1). Unfortunately it is a little too big for planting beneath most power lines. The tree usually maintains a fairly good central leader with small-diameter main branches. The four to six-inch-long, glossy green leaves are particularly striking and create light shade below the trees but they show no appreciable color change in autumn, dropping while they are still green. In early summer, the branch-tips of the trees are festooned with small, two to three-inch-long cymes of sweetly-fragrant, greenish-white flowers which are quite attractive to insects. These blooms are followed by the production of small, fleshy, brown drupes which ripen to bright red and have a flavor similar to a sweet raisin, giving the tree its common name.

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**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** *Hovenia dulcis*  
**Pronunciation:** hoe-VEE-nee-ah DULL-sis  
**Common name(s):** Japanese Raisintree  
**Family:** Rhamnaceae  
**USDA hardness zones:** 6 through 10A (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; shade tree; specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

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DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 30 to 35 feet  
**Spread:** 15 to 25 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms  
**Crown shape:** oval; pyramidal; upright  
**Crown density:** open  
**Growth rate:** medium  
**Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** serrate  
**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); ovate  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate; reticulate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
**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:** < .5 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** red  
**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** grow mostly upright and will not droop; 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:** brown  
**Current year twig thickness:** medium; thin
Culture

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

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

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

**Pest resistance:** no pests are normally seen on the tree

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

The bark of Japanese Raisintree is ridged and an attractive light grey with brown valleys. Lower branches can be removed or trimmed to display the lovely bark. The trunk often grows straight up the center of the tree without training.

Trees will grow in almost any well-drained soil in full sun or partial shade. Not for poorly-drained areas or compacted soil, Japanese Raisintree prefers adequate soil space for root exploration.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.