**Ochrosia elliptica**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

**INTRODUCTION**

This large, upright, evergreen shrub or small tree has glossy, leathery leaves and clusters of fragrant, yellow/white flowers from late summer into winter, followed by bright red, two-inch-long, poisonous fruit borne in pairs (Fig. 1). The fruit is poisonous. It will make a nice tree for a patio area providing shade with the lower branches removed, or a visual screen of coarse, dense foliage without growing too tall. It is suited for planting beneath power lines due to maximum height of 20 to 25 feet.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Scientific name: *Ochrosia elliptica*

Pronunciation: oh-KROE-zee-uh ee-LIP-tih-kuh

Common name(s): Ochrosia

Family: Apocynaceae

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; espalier; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; screen; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

**DESCRIPTION**

Height: 20 to 25 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; upright

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: medium

Texture: coarse

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite; whorled (Fig. 3)
- **Leaf type:** simple
- **Leaf margin:** entire; undulate
- **Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); oblong; obovate
- **Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; 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:** yellow
- **Flower characteristics:** fall flowering; pleasant fragrance; showy; summer flowering; winter flowering

**Fruit**

- **Fruit shape:** oval
- **Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches
- **Fruit covering:** fleshy
- **Fruit color:** red
- **Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

**Trunk and Branches**

- **Trunk/bark/branches:** routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns
- **Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure
- **Breakage:** resistant
- **Current year twig color:** green
- **Current year twig thickness:** thick
Pests

Pest problems include scale and occasionally mites. These can be locally troublesome.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Salt-tolerant Ochrosia grows well close to the ocean in full sun or partial shade on a wide range of soils, including alkaline, and responds well to fertilizing. It is very drought-tolerant but responds well to irrigation and fertilizer. Its dark green, dense foliage makes it ideal for tall screens or at the rear of a shrub border.

Propagation is by scarified seed or cuttings.