Parrotia persica
Persian Parrotia

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INTRODUCTION

This 20 to 40-foot-high deciduous tree forms a low-branched, rounded silhouette, 20 to 35 feet wide, and often has multiple trunks, although it can be trained to a single trunk (Fig. 1). The flowers which appear before the leaves in spring are somewhat interesting, showing no petals just a profusion of relatively inconspicuous deep crimson stamens. Fruits are not set in abundance and are of little consequence. But it is the foliage of Persian Parrotia which attracts the most attention, unfolding as reddish-purple young leaves, maturing to a lustrous, dark green through the summer, and then finally putting on a brilliant fall display of various hues of vivid yellow, burnt orange, and deep, pure scarlet. Even in winter Persian Parrotia is a striking landscape element, the much-branched canopy and multiple trunks finally able to clearly display their attractive peeling bark and spectacular form. Trunk and bark character can be displayed year-round by removing lower branches and foliage.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Parrotia persica
Pronunciation: par-ROE-tee-uh PER-sih-kuh
Common name(s): Persian Parrotia
Family: Hamamelidaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 8 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); 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; shade tree; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 20 to 40 feet
Spread: 20 to 35 feet

Figure 1. Middle-aged Persian Parrotia.
Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms
Crown shape: round; vase shape
Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: crenate; dentate; serrate
Leaf shape: oblong; obovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: orange; red; yellow
Fall characteristic: showy

Flower
Flower color: red
Flower characteristics: showy; spring flowering

Fruit
Fruit shape: irregular
Fruit length: < .5 inch
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
Breakage: resistant
**Current year twig color:** brown  
**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:** high

**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**

These ornamental characteristics and a pest-free nature make Persian Parrotia ideal for use as a specimen or street tree. Accent the tree in a landscape by setting it off by itself in a lawn or in a bed of low ground cover. Space 20 to 30 feet apart along a street or walk to create a canopy over the walk. It will not canopy over the street but will form a wall of wonderful foliage along the sides of a residential street. This tree should be grown and planted more.

Persian Parrotia should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained, slightly acid soil and will adapt to alkaline soil provided other cultural requirements are met. Trees will not tolerate wet soil conditions, but should show considerable drought tolerance once established.

The cultivar ‘Pendula’ reportedly forms a rounded, weeping silhouette, five to six feet high by 10 feet wide, but is rare in the trade.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern. It is virtually pest free.