INTRODUCTION

In earlier days, malaria and other fevers were treated at home with a medicine made from the inner bark of this deciduous, 30-foot-tall, North American native tree, giving it the common name "Fevertree" (Fig. 1). The tree is also referred to as Pinckneya bractea. The tree is more commonly seen at 15 to 20 feet tall by 15 feet wide as an open-grown landscape tree. The large, dark green leaves, five to eight inches long and three to four inches wide, have a lighter underside and are covered with a light fuzz when young. The clusters of yellowish-green, 2.5-inch-long tubular flowers are made more conspicuous by the cream to bright rose-colored, petal-like sepals, making Fevertree quite spectacular when it is in full bloom in early summer. The brown, spotted, round seed capsules which follow stay on the trees throughout the winter.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Pinckneya pubens
Pronunciation: PINK-nee-uh PEW-benz
Common name(s): Pinckneya, Fevertree
Family: Rubiaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 7B through 9 (Fig. 2)
Origin: native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; near a deck or patio; specimen; no proven urban tolerance
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 20 feet
Spread: 12 to 18 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: round

Figure 1. Young Pinckneya.
**Crown density:** open  
**Growth rate:** medium  
**Texture:** coarse

### Foliage

- **Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)  
- **Leaf type:** simple  
- **Leaf margin:** entire  
- **Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); oblong  
- **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:** pink; yellow  
- **Flower characteristics:** summer flowering; very showy

### Fruit

- **Fruit shape:** round  
- **Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch  
- **Fruit covering:** dry or hard  
- **Fruit color:** brown  
- **Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; 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; 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:** brown; gray  
- **Current year twig thickness:** medium

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*Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.*
Figure 3. Foliage of Pinckneya.

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; extended flooding; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Other**

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time  
**Pest resistance:** no pests are normally seen on the tree

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

The unusual, open, coarse habit of growth and showy flowers make this a conversation piece in any yard. Use it as an accent in a sunny shrub border or as a specimen near the patio or deck. This is certainly a tree to consider when planning a yard due to the small size and pest resistance.

Found in its native habitat on poorly drained land or along swamp-margins, Fevertree should only be planted on moist soils or those areas which are flooded with rains periodically throughout the year. Although best flowering appears to be in full sun, trees grown in partial shade will grow but flower poorly. Not for a landscape unless it is occasionally irrigated during dry summers.

Propagation is by seed or division of the many root-suckers.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.