Robinia pseudoacacia ‘Umbraculifera’
Umbrella Black Locust

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INTRODUCTION

A fast-growing deciduous tree, Umbrella Black Locust grows to about 20 feet tall and wide (Fig. 1). The weeping, round habit forms a canopy much denser than the species casting dense shade below the tree. The 6 to 14-inch-long, dark green leaves, made up of multiple leaflets, are some of the last to appear in spring and often drop early in the autumn. Flowers irregularly with only a flower ‘here and there’ in the crown. The two to four-inch-long, dark red to black, leathery seeds pods which sometimes follow will persist on the trees throughout the winter.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Robinia pseudoacacia ‘Umbraculifera’

Pronunciation: roe-BIN-nee-uh soo-doe-uh-KAY-shuh
Common name(s): Umbrella Black Locust, Umbrella Locust
Family: Leguminosae
USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 8 (Fig. 2)
Origin: native to North America
Uses: shade tree; specimen; no proven urban tolerance
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 20 feet
Spread: 20 to 25 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms
Crown shape: round; weeping
Crown density: dense
Growth rate: fast
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: odd pinnately compound
Leaflet margin: entire
Leaflet shape: elliptic (oval); oblong; obovate
Leaflet venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaflet blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green

Figure 1. Mature Umbrella Black Locust.

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-573, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.
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.
Fall color: yellow
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: no flowers
Flower characteristics: no flowers

Fruit
There is no fruit on this tree.

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: 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: susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break
Current year twig color: brown
Current year twig thickness: thin
Wood specific gravity: 0.69

Culture
Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerance: good

Other
Roots: surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing
Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible
Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics
The tree is best used as a specimen for an outstanding ornamental effect. Plant on 20 to 30-foot-centers along an entrance road or along highway medians. This should be a very adaptable, pretty tree for urban plantings, but is usually not grown by nursery operators. The root suckering and invasive root system allows the species to quickly spread into surrounding landscapes. This feature should be considered when placing Black Locust in the ornamental garden, although the cultivar may not sucker as much.

Although the wood of Black Locust is reputed to be extremely strong and durable (pioneers used it to fashion nails for building ships and houses), the branches are brittle and subject to damage in high winds. This may be due largely to the tendency for the branches to form a narrow angle with the trunk and to grow aggressively relative to the trunk. This can be partially corrected by pruning the major branches so they grow to no more than about half the size of the trunk. Try to space the major branches along the trunk as best you can to develop a strong tree which will stay together. This will be difficult since the tree is usually purchased with the major branches well developed and most of them originate from one point on the trunk.

Able to tolerate drought, salt, and poor soil, Black Locust will grow in full sun or partial shade on almost any soil except that which is permanently wet. The species is a tough tree which will grow on the toughest sites, and there is no reason to believe this cultivar will respond differently.

**Pests**

Locust borer is a serious pest although borer-resistant clones are now being developed. Also bothered by carpenterworm, locust leaf miner, and scales. Leaf miner is a universal problem on the species, and the trees along the highways in the south can be seen in summer riddled with damage from this pest.

**Diseases**

This tree is susceptible to canker, leaf spot, and powdery mildew.