



Cinnamomum camphora Camphor-Tree¹

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INTRODUCTION

This large, round-canopied, evergreen tree has broad, large-diameter, unusually strong branches and can reach 70 feet in height with a broader spread but is usually 40 to 50 feet with a 40 to 60-foot spread (Fig. 1). The glossy green, thin but leathery leaves give off a camphor aroma when crushed and create dense shade. The stems and bark on young branches of Camphor-Tree are bright green, tinged with red when young, maturing into a dark grey-brown, rugged-looking trunk which appears almost black when wet from rain. Trunk and branch structure on older trees appear similar to mature live oaks. The inconspicuous, tiny, yellow flowers are followed by a profusion of small, black berries which can become an annoyance on walks and driveways because they are messy but are quite attractive to wildlife. Fruits will stain cars. Some occasionally germinate below the tree but not nearly as much of a problem as some other trees. Birds can also carry the seed to remote areas where it will occasionally germinate. The leaves, twigs, and wood are the commercial source of camphor. The dried bark of *Cinnamomum zeylanicum* yields cinnamon.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Cinnamomum camphora*
Pronunciation: sin-uh-MOE-mum kam-FOR-uh
Common name(s): Camphor-Tree
Family: *Lauraceae*
USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America

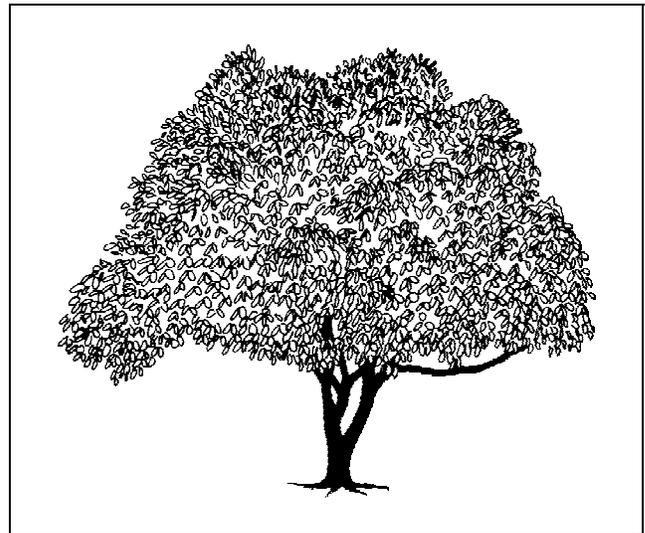


Figure 1. Middle-aged Camphor-Tree.

Uses: screen; shade tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 40 to 50 feet
Spread: 50 to 70 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms
Crown shape: round
Crown density: dense
Growth rate: fast

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: obovate; ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen; fragrant

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: < .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: black

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter

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: resistant

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: medium; thin

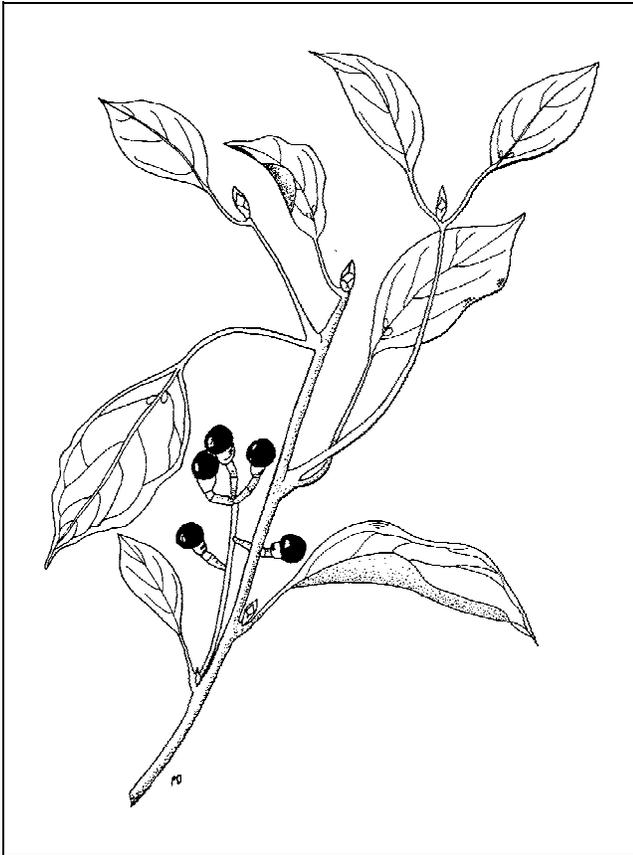


Figure 3. Foliage of Camphor-Tree.

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

Aerosol salt tolerance: low

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: No entries found.

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not
affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Too big for all but the largest spaces, Camphor-Tree is ideal when used as a shade tree for parks or large landscapes. Use along streets should be tempered because messy fruits drop on sidewalks and cars. It might be considered for boulevard planting where cars do not park. Prune to develop major branches, space 18 to 30 inches apart along a central trunk to develop good structure. Do not allow major branches to grow from the same spot on the trunk and avoid upright, multi-trunked trees. It may be difficult to maintain a lawn beneath the dense shade of Camphor-Trees and a shade-tolerant groundcover may better suit the purpose. The trunk on older specimens grows to six feet or more in diameter and is quite picturesque. Allow plenty of room for proper development above and below ground. Shallow roots can be a nuisance. Has escaped cultivation in some areas.

Growing in full sun to partial shade, Camphor-Tree is amenable to a variety of soils, will grow but often develops minor element deficiencies on alkaline soils. Camphor-Tree is highly tolerant of urban conditions but will not tolerate water-logged soils. It is adapted to grow along the coast exposed to some sea salt.

The cultivar 'Monum' has larger, richer green foliage.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests

Scales and mites are common problems on Camphor-Trees. Seeds can germinate easily in the landscape but this is usually a minor problem. Has escaped cultivation in Florida, Louisiana, and parts of coastal Texas, so use it (if at all) with caution.

Diseases

Camphor-Tree is subject to a root rot, especially in poorly-drained soils.