



Eucommia ulmoides Hardy Rubber Tree¹

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INTRODUCTION

If you want green leaves on a tree during a severe drought, this is your tree! This little-known but urban-tough, very attractive, 40 to 60-foot-high, slow-growing, deciduous tree has a dense, symmetrical oval to rounded crown and low-branched silhouette, making it ideal for use as a specimen, shade or street tree (Fig. 1). The thin, three to eight-inch-long, glossy, dark green leaves are almost totally resistant to pests and disease and remain an attractive dark green throughout the summer, changing only to a paler green before dropping in early fall. The foliage is quite striking and appears to glimmer in the moonlight or when lit from above. Branches ascend forming an upright silhouette in winter. The inconspicuous blooms are followed by the production of small, 1.5-inch-long, flat, winged seeds. Only one or two corrective prunings at an early age normally is all that is needed to develop good structure in the crown.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Eucommia ulmoides*

Pronunciation: yoo-KOM-ee-uh ul-MOY-deez

Common name(s): Hardy Rubber Tree

Family: *Eucommiaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 4B through 7 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings

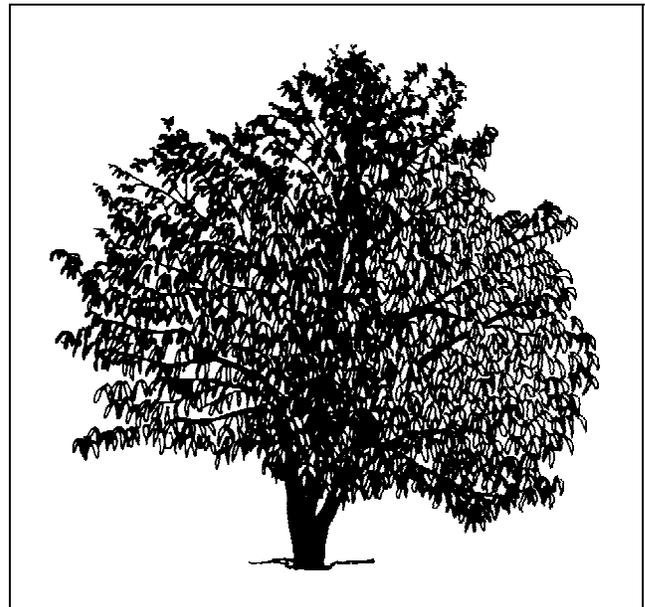


Figure 1. Middle-aged Hardy Rubber Tree.

in the highway; screen; shade tree; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street 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 60 feet

Spread: 25 to 35 feet

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: round; spreading

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); oblong; ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: brown

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: grow mostly upright and will not droop; 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: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium; thick

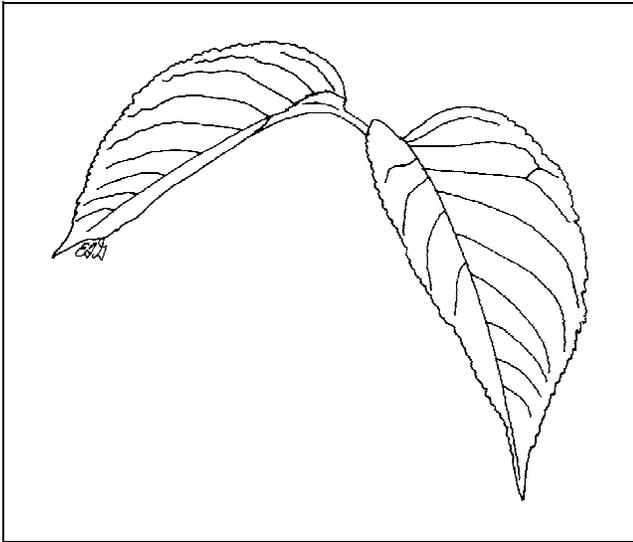


Figure 3. Foliage of Hardy Rubber Tree.

extensive drought. Trees have been growing in parts of North Carolina for many years without irrigation and have survived extreme drought in very poor, clay soil in the full sun. But they grow slowly. They should be grown and tried more often in urban areas such as in highway medians, along streets and as a medium-sized shade tree. Growth rate appears to be quite slow but could probably be improved with adequate irrigation. The tree is adapted to high soil pH.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

Amazingly free of any problems but do not plant it in poorly-drained soil.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: moderate

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

The Chinese have used the Hardy Rubber Tree for more than 2,000 years for its medicinal value. Trees there rarely reach a mature size since they are harvested regularly and stripped of their ridged or furrowed, grey/brown bark. Hardy Rubber Tree may be the only tree which grows in cold climates from which a rubber product can be obtained. This rubbery substance is visible as thin strands which bridge two sections of a torn leaf.

Hardy Rubber Tree should be grown in full sun on moist soil but when well-established tolerates