



Spathodea campanulata African Tulip-Tree¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

A native of tropical Africa, this large, upright, 50 to 60-foot tree has a dense, 40-foot-wide crown and one-and-one-half-foot-long, pinnately-compound, evergreen leaves composed of four-inch leaflets (Fig. 1). Due to its size it is best located in large, open landscapes and is generally not suited for small residences unless your objective is deep shade. During winter and until late spring, African Tulip-Tree produces terminal clusters of beautiful blooms held above the foliage, a profusion of upwardly-facing, orange and yellow flowers which open several at a time from curved, two-inch-long, fuzzy brown flower buds filled with water. African Tulip-Tree is quite spectacular when in bloom. It is often used as a framing, shade, or specimen tree but must be used only in frost-free areas. Also, its soft, brittle wood is easily broken by high winds, and trees should be located either in sheltered locations or where falling branches will do no damage.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Spathodea campanulata*

Pronunciation: spath-OH-dee-uh
kam-pan-yoo-LAY-tuh

Common name(s): African Tulip-Tree

Family: *Bignoniaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: shade tree; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

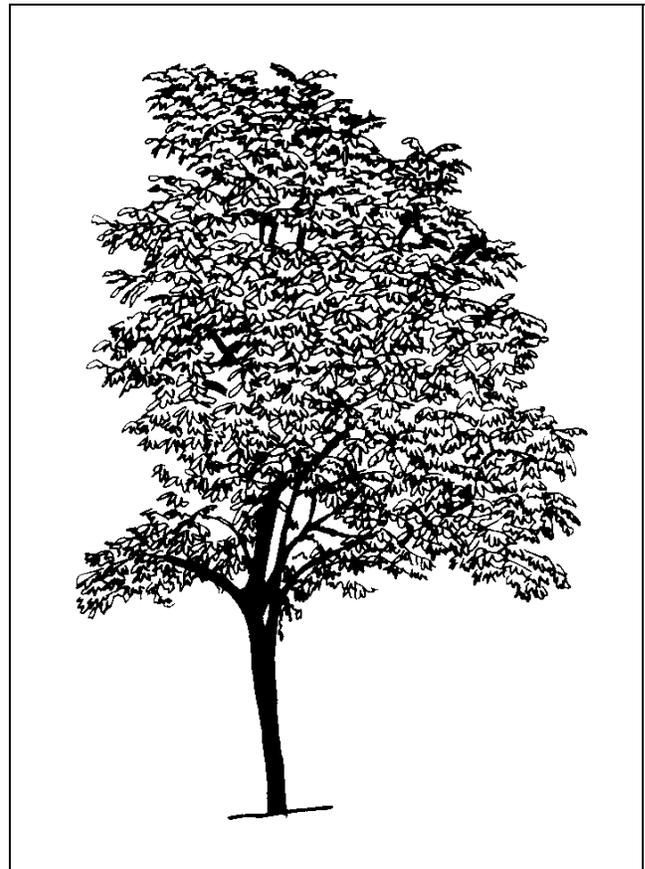


Figure 1. Young African Tulip-Tree.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 50 to 60 feet

Spread: 35 to 50 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: round; spreading; upright

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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.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: odd pinnately compound

Leaflet margin: entire

Leaflet shape: elliptic (oval); oblong

Leaflet venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen

Leaflet blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: orange; yellow

Flower characteristics: spring flowering; very showy; winter flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; pod

Fruit length: 6 to 12 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; 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; not particularly showy; 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: medium

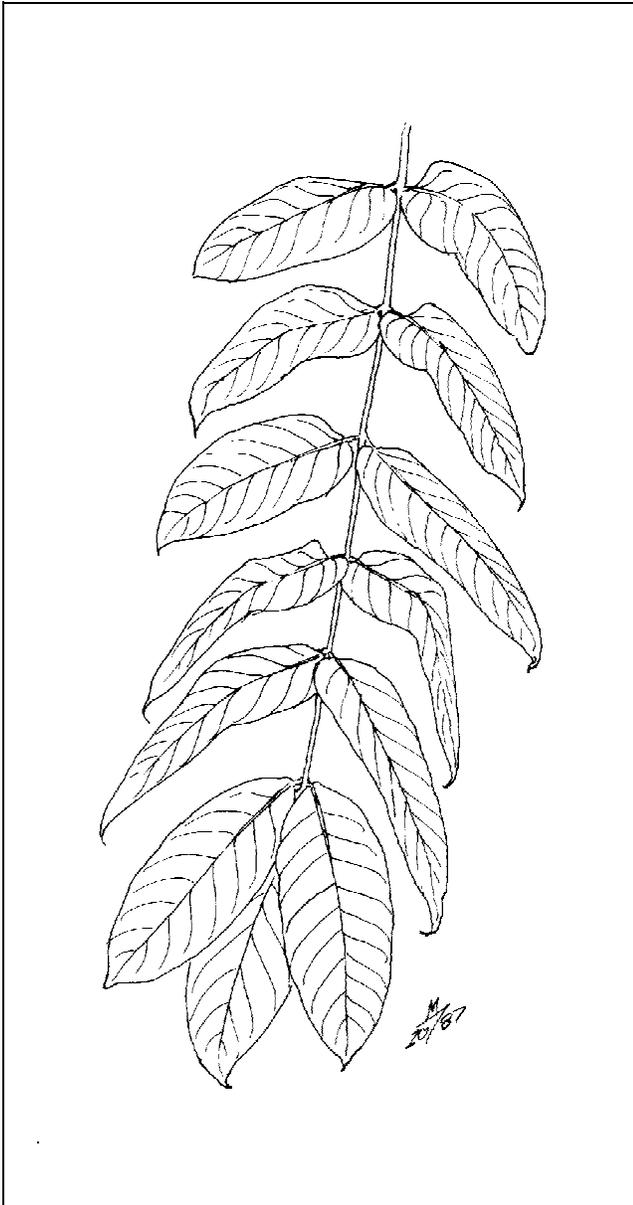


Figure 3. Foliage of African Tulip-Tree.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

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.

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Eliminate major branches that will form embedded bark as early as possible. Save those that are oriented more horizontally, with stonger attachments to the trunk. Keep them from growing larger than about half the trunk diameter by periodic thinning.

African Tulip-Trees will grow rapidly in full sun on any soil of reasonable drainage and fertility. Plants should be regularly watered until well-established and will then require little care.

Propagation is by seed, softwood cuttings, or root suckers.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases of major concern.