



Aesculus x carnea 'Briotii' Ruby Red Horsechestnut¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

This hybrid of *Aesculus hippocastanum* and *Aesculus pavia* has very large, dark green leaves composed of five to seven leaflets, and will ultimately reach a height and spread of 35 to 50 feet but grows slowly (Fig. 1). Although deciduous, Ruby Red Horsechestnut does not produce any appreciable fall color and is well-suited for use as a specimen. The tree is quite striking with dark green, coarse-textured foliage. Pyramidal in shape when very young, Red Horsechestnut develops slowly into a round, very dense shade tree by five to seven years of age, and is outstanding in the landscape for its beautiful springtime display of blossoms. The multitude of deep scarlet flowers in erect, 10-inch-long panicles at each branch tip are quite attractive to bees and hummingbirds. The prickly seedpods which can be messy on the original hybrid are nearly absent on this cultivar making it better suited than the species for urban street tree planting.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Aesculus x carnea* 'Briotii'

Pronunciation: ESS-kew-lus x KAR-nee-uh

Common name(s): Ruby Red Horsechestnut

Family: *Hippocastanaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 7 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: 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

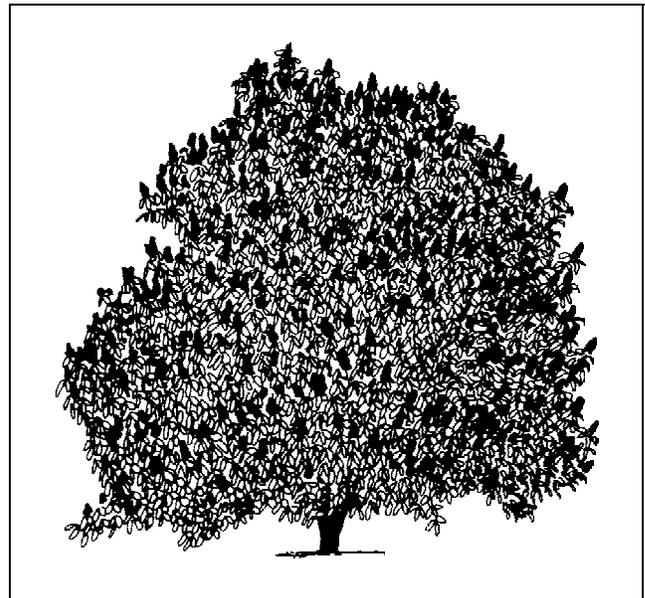


Figure 1. Middle-aged Ruby Red Horsechestnut.

for median strip plantings in the highway; screen; shade tree; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree

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

DESCRIPTION

Height: 35 to 45 feet

Spread: 35 to 45 feet

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

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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.

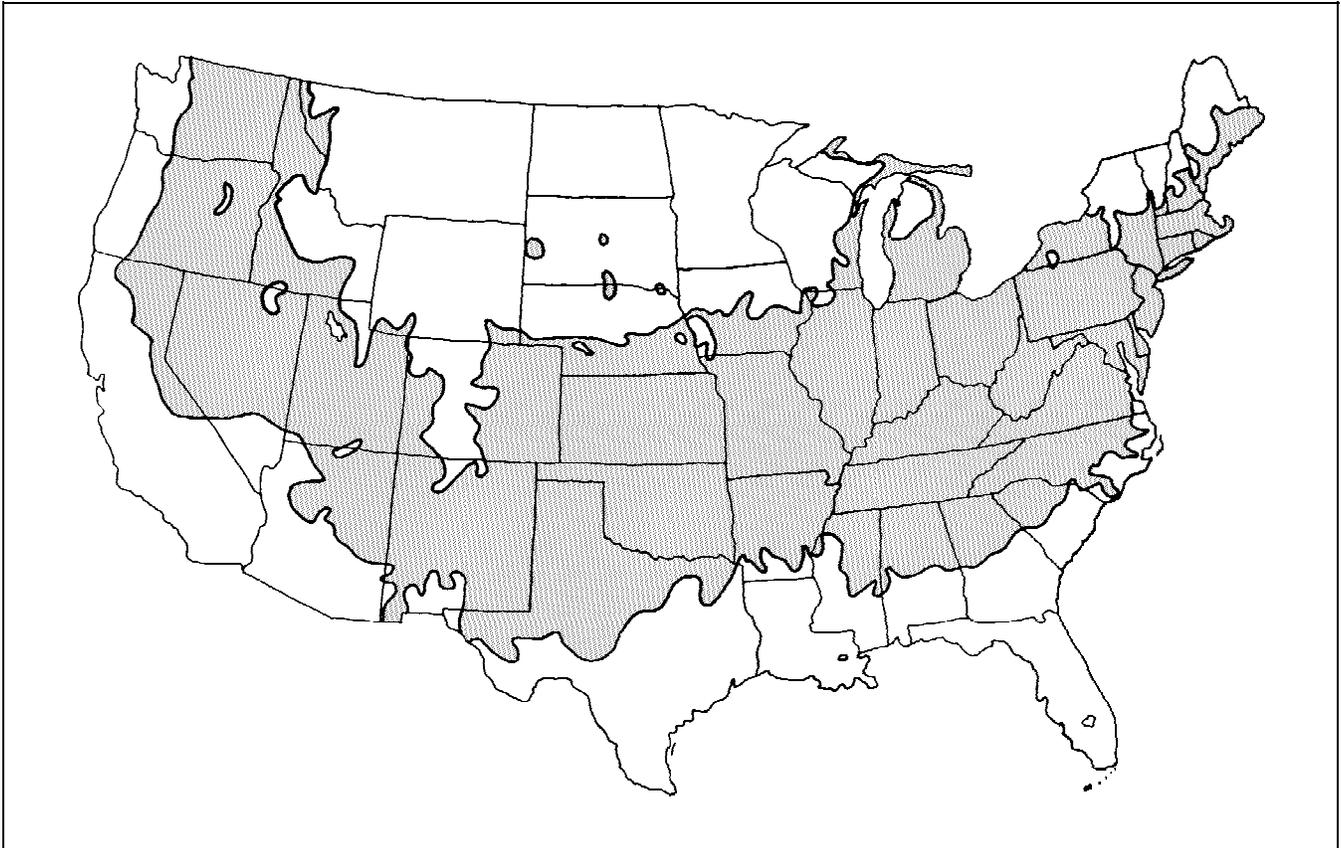


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Crown shape: round; pyramidal

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: palmately compound

Leaflet margin: serrate

Leaflet shape: oblanceolate

Leaflet venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaflet blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: pink; red

Flower characteristics: spring flowering; very showy

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; 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

Current year twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

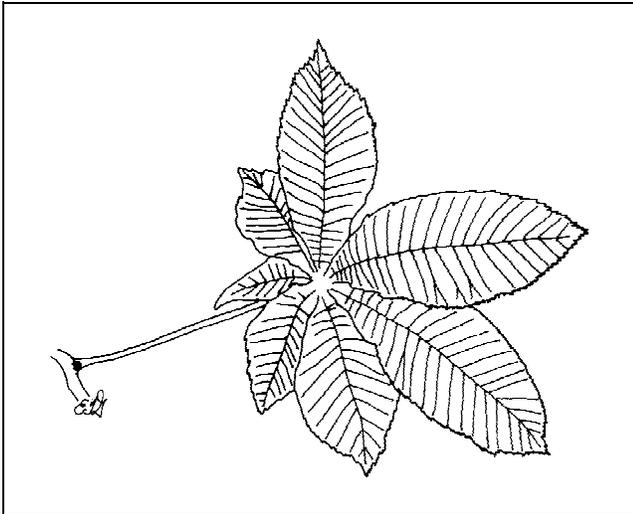


Figure 3. Foliage of Ruby Red Horsechestnut.

Soil salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible

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

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Leaf and flower litter in the summer and fall may be objectionable to some people since the leaves are large and decompose slowly. Makes a great median street tree when provided with some irrigation during drought.

Ruby Red Horsechestnut will grow in full sun or light shade and prefers moist, well-drained, acid soils but grows in slightly alkaline soil. Plants are moderately tolerant to drought, wind, and salt and resist the heat of the south very well. It holds up well in urban areas, even in restricted and compacted soil spaces. Red Horsechestnut appears to be less susceptible to disease than either of the parents. Trunk bark may crack when exposed to the direct sun so keep it shaded as much as possible by leaving lower branches on the tree and don't over-prune the tree, exposing the trunk suddenly to direct sun. The tree usually requires little pruning to develop a good form.

The cultivar 'Rosea' has pink flowers. 'O'Neil's Red' has double red flowers.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern, although this plant has not been thoroughly tested in the United States. Probably scorches less than *Aesculus hippocastanum*, and should be planted in its place.