



Aesculus pavia Red Buckeye¹

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INTRODUCTION

Red Buckeye is a small North American native tree, capable of reaching 25 to 30 feet tall in the wild though is most often at 15 to 20 feet high when grown in cultivation (Fig. 1). Red Buckeye is most popular for its springtime display of three to six-inch-long, upright, terminal panicles composed of 1.5-inch-wide, red flowers which are quite attractive to hummingbirds. These blooms are followed by flat, round capsules which contain bitter and poisonous seeds. The large, dark green, palmate leaves usually offer no great color change in fall and often drop as early as late September.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Aesculus pavia*

Pronunciation: ESS-kew-lus PAY-vee-uh

Common name(s): Red Buckeye

Family: *Hippocastanaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 6 through 9A (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; reclamation plant; shade tree; specimen; residential street tree

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



Figure 1. Young Red Buckeye.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 20 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: round; pyramidal

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: palmately compound

Leaflet margin: double serrate; serrate

Leaflet shape: elliptic (oval); obovate

Leaflet venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaflet 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: red

Flower characteristics: spring flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: attracts squirrels and other mammals; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

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

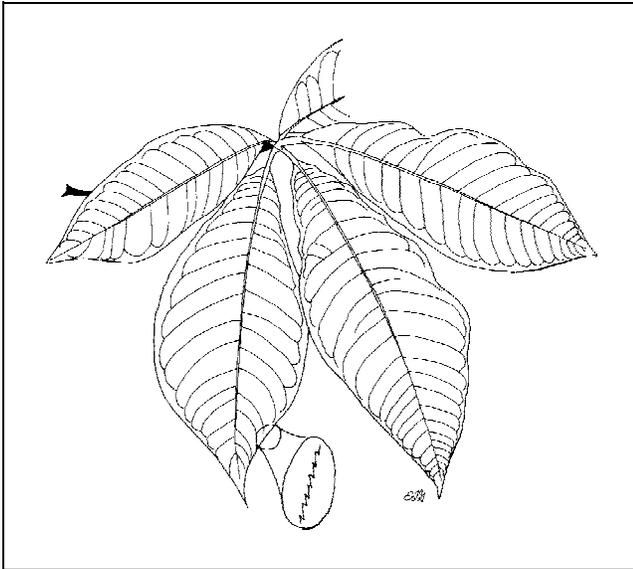


Figure 3. Foliage of Red Buckeye.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in the shade

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol 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

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible

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

USE AND MANAGEMENT

The coarse, open structure and the light brown, flaky bark is quite attractive and offers great winter landscape interest. Branches arise from the typically straight trunk at a wide angle forming a durable structure. There are many, small-diameter branches with an occasional upright, aggressive one growing as large as the trunk. Main branches begin forming low on the trunk and remain there when grown in the full sun.

The tree is best used as a novelty patio tree or as part of a shrubbery border to add bright red color for several weeks in the spring and coarse texture during the rest of the year. Plant it in a medium- to large-sized residential landscape as a very coarse accent. Extremely coarse in winter without leaves, Red Buckeye will attract attention with the bright brown or tan bark reflecting the rays of the sun. Lower branches can be removed to allow for clearance beneath the crown, but the tree looks its best planted in the open to allow branches to fully develop to the ground.

Red Buckeye will flower well in rather dense shade but takes on its best form when grown in full sun with some afternoon shade on moist, well-drained soil. It is native along moist stream banks and is not very drought-tolerant.

The cultivar 'Atrosanguinea' has deeper red flowers; 'Humilis' is a low or prostrate shrub with small panicles of red flowers. Hybrids between *Aesculus pavia* x *Aesculus sylvatica* have been seen, bearing red and yellow flowers.

Red Buckeye is easily grown from seed, with plants flowering after three years.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.