



Fraxinus velutina Velvet Ash¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

This fast-growing, deciduous, native North American tree reaches a height of 30 to 50 feet, depending upon cultural conditions (Fig. 1). It is capable of growing taller in its native habitat. The three to six-inch-long leaves are divided into multiple leaflets and turn a brilliant yellow in fall before dropping. The inconspicuous, green, springtime flowers are followed by the production of showy, persistent fruits. The tree has been widely grown in California and in parts of the west including Texas.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Fraxinus velutina*

Pronunciation: FRACK-sih-nus vell-LOO-tih-nuh

Common name(s): Velvet Ash, Modesto Ash, Arizona Ash

Family: *Oleaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 8 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); 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; reclamation plant; shade tree; 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

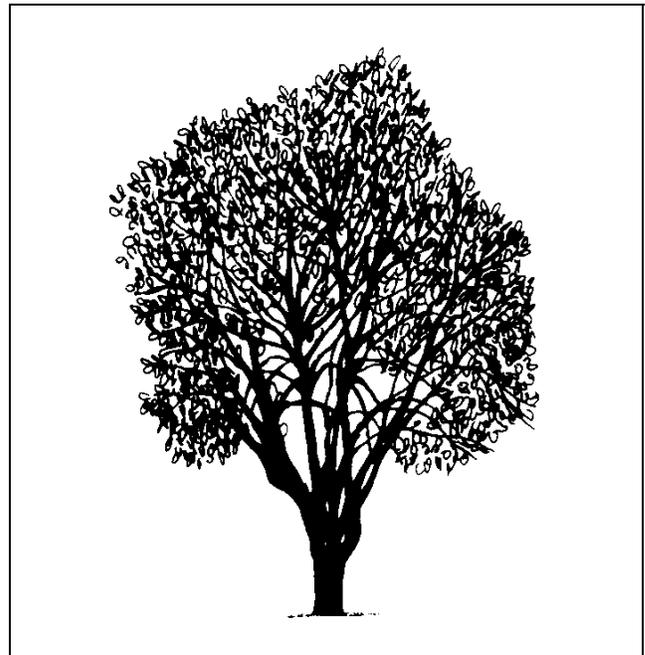


Figure 1. Middle-aged Velvet Ash.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 30 to 50 feet

Spread: 45 to 60 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: round

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

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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.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite
- Leaf type:** odd pinnately compound
- Leaflet margin:** serrate
- Leaflet shape:** elliptic (oval); lanceolate
- Leaflet venation:** pinnate
- Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous
- Leaflet blade length:** 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** yellow
- Fall characteristic:** showy

Flower

- Flower color:** green
- Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** elongated
- Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch
- Fruit covering:** dry or hard
- Fruit color:** green; tan

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** grow mostly upright and will not droop; 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:** gray
- Current year twig thickness:** medium; thick

Culture

- Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun
- Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained
- Drought tolerance:** high

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

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

Ozone sensitivity: tolerant

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

USE AND MANAGEMENT

The tree has been traditionally difficult to maintain due to the development of many upright trunks originating from the same position on the main trunk. This condition has led to the creation of weak trees which often break apart at the base of the multiple trunks. Careful pruning and branch selection is required during the first 15 years after planting to ensure good, strong trunk and branch development. It is important to purchase good quality planting stock which has a central leader and no upright multiple trunks. This will make the tree much easier to maintain in the landscape. Some horticulturists do not recommend planting this tree due to the high pruning requirement and susceptibility to breakage.

Velvet Ash should be grown in full sun on any soil and will tolerate both alkaline and rocky soils. It is tolerant of wet soil and has been extensively used along streets in areas with poor drainage. Roots often grow close to the soil surface causing a nuisance by breaking sidewalks and curbs.

The cultivar 'Arizona' is widely planted but reportedly has the same problems as the species.

Propagation is easily done by seed.

Pests

It is very susceptible to borers. Trees often have a short-life.

Diseases

Texas Ash is susceptible to verticillium wilt.