



Kalopanax pictus Castor-Aralia¹

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INTRODUCTION

With massive, spreading branches and large, 7 to 12-inch-diameter, dark green, multi-lobed leaves, Castor-Aralia provides dense shade below its canopy and makes an ideal shade tree (Fig. 1). Growing 40 to 50 feet high with an equal spread, Castor-Aralia is deciduous, the leaves turning a faint red in fall before dropping. While the young stems are armed with short, yellow prickles, the mature trunk is attractively ridged and blackened. The one-inch-diameter, white flowers appear in dense, 12 to 24-inch-long terminal panicles and attract quite a few bees. This is not a problem on larger specimens since flowers are borne up in the tree away from the ground. The small black fruit which ripens in early fall is eagerly consumed by birds.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Kalopanax pictus*

Pronunciation: kal-oh-PAN-acks PICK-tus

Common name(s): Castor-Aralia, Prickly Castor-Oil Tree

Family: *Araliaceae*

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

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); shade tree; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

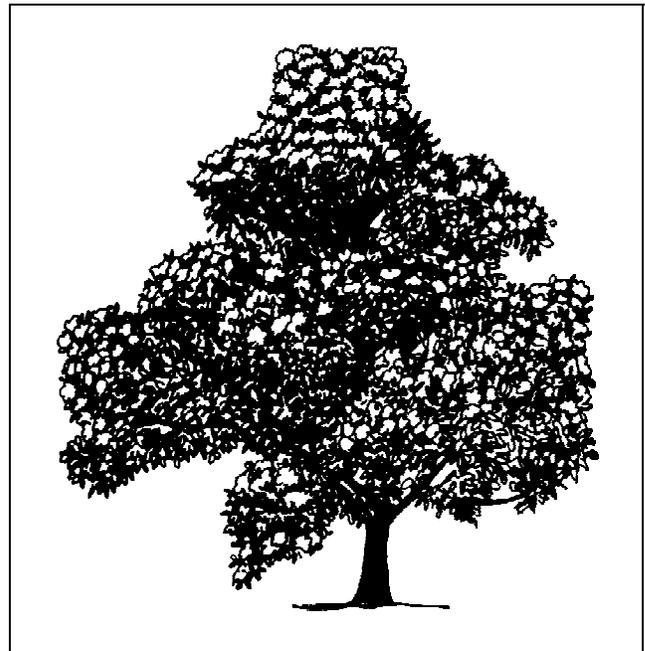


Figure 1. Mature Castor-Aralia.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 40 to 50 feet

Spread: 40 to 60 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: round

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: medium

Texture: coarse

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-335, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
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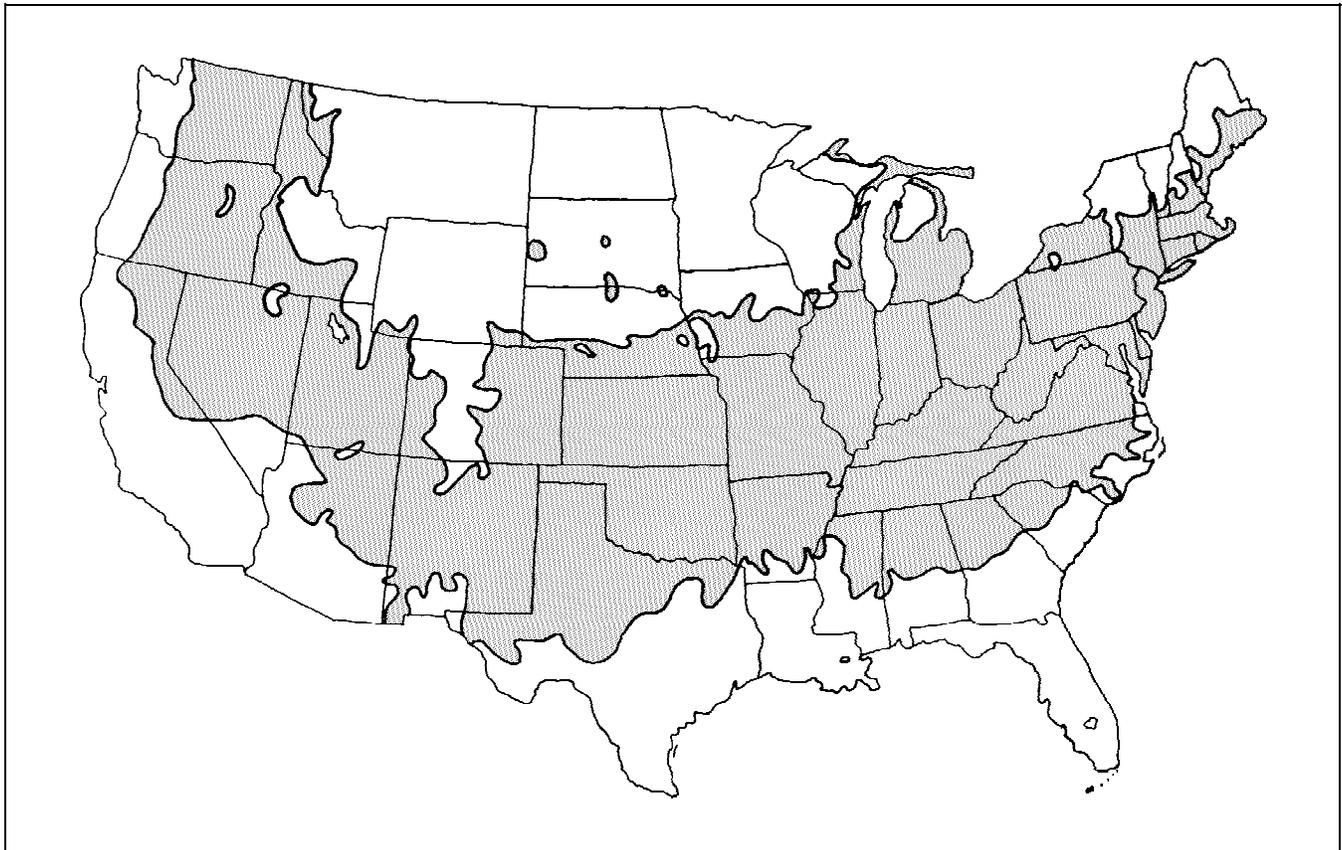


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** lobed
- Leaf shape:** star-shaped
- Leaf venation:** palmate
- Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous
- Leaf blade length:** 8 to 12 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** red; yellow
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

Flower

- Flower color:** white
- Flower characteristics:** showy; summer flowering

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** round
- Fruit length:** < .5 inch
- Fruit covering:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** black
- Fruit characteristics:** attracts squirrels and other mammals; 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; thorns are present on the trunk or branches
- Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
- Breakage:** resistant
- Current year twig color:** brown
- Current year twig thickness:** stout

Culture

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

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

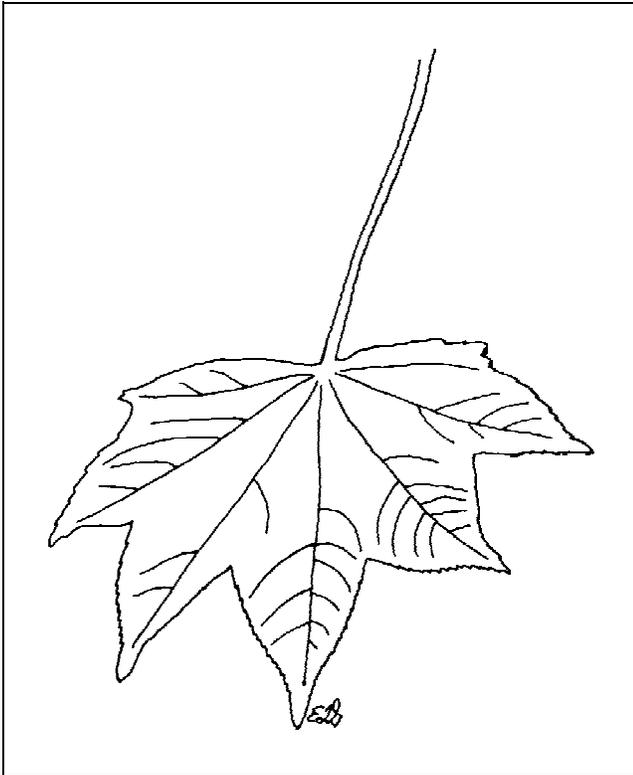


Figure 3. Foliage of Castor-Aralia.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

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

Invasive potential: No entries found.

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

This tree could be planted more often in landscapes, but seeds germinate readily in the landscape. Use it with caution near open fields and wetlands. The large size and coarse texture probably make it best suited for large-scale landscapes, such as golf courses, parks, business complexes and campuses, but it could be tried along streets where there is plenty of soil space for root expansion.

Castor-Aralia should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil and will tolerate alkaline soil. While drought-tolerant once established, Castor-Aralia should receive ample moisture until then. Any pruning should be done in late spring, and Castor-Aralia is considered a long-lived tree.

Propagation is by seed.