

# *Aesculus flava*: Yellow Buckeye<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Yellow buckeye reaches 60 to 75 feet in height with an oval to slightly spreading canopy and large, dark green leaves composed of five-fingered leaflets, casting dense shade below. The thick canopy makes this tree well suited for a tall screen or shade tree. Small yellow/green flowers appear in dense, upwardly-pointing, 6- to 7-inch-long, terminal panicles in early spring, and are followed by 2.5-inch-long, smooth, pear-shaped capsules containing bitter, poisonous seeds. The leaves change to brilliant yellow before dropping in autumn.



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Aesculus flava*: Yellow Buckeye  
Credits: Ed Gilman

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Aesculus flava*

**Pronunciation:** ESS-kew-lus FLAY-vuh

**Common name(s):** Yellow buckeye, sweet buckeye

**Family:** *Hippocastanaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 4A through 8A (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential

**Uses:** screen; specimen; shade; highway median

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



Figure 2. Range

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## Description

**Height:** 60 to 75 feet  
**Spread:** 25 to 35 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical  
**Crown shape:** oval  
**Crown density:** dense  
**Growth rate:** moderate  
**Texture:** coarse

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** palmately compound  
**Leaf margin:** serrate  
**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** yellow  
**Fall characteristic:** showy

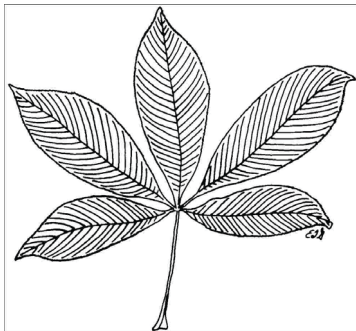


Figure 3. Foliage

## Flower

**Flower color:** yellow  
**Flower characteristics:** very showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval, round  
**Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches  
**Fruit covering:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** brown  
**Fruit characteristics:** attracts squirrels/mammals; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; not showy; typically one trunk; thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure  
**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown, green  
**Current year twig thickness:** thick  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; acidic; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no  
**Outstanding tree:** yes  
**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** resistant  
**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

## Use and Management

The tree has a striking, coarse texture and leaves that are as dark as any other tree, attracting attention as a specimen plant. But save it for large areas so the wonderful form of this large tree can be appreciated. Certainly not suited for small residences due to its overpowering size and texture. Leaf and flower litter in the summer and fall may be objectionable to some people. The nuts make good food for wildlife, but you may not want it scattered along city streets.

A North American native, yellow buckeye grows best along stream beds in full sun or partial shade and should be planted in moist, well-drained soil rich in organic matter. It is not as susceptible to foliage diseases as *Aesculus hippocastanum*.

Propagation is by seed.

## Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases of major concern are known at this time.