UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

ENH240

Araucaria araucana: Monkey Puzzle Tree[1]

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Introduction

Monkey puzzle tree is a large, bizarre evergreen, 60 to 70 feet tall and 30 to 35 feet wide, which forms a loose, see-through, pyramidal shape with a straight trunk. The tree is so open in habit you could almost look at it and not see it. The leaves are dark green, stiff, with sharp needles densely arranged on horizontal, irregular, upwardly sweeping branches. Monkey puzzle tree makes an attractive, novelty specimen for a large, open yard or commercial landscape. It is normally planted only as an oddity someplace in the rear of a landscape out of view from most passers-by but could be the specimen feature in a large oriental landscape.



Figure 1. Mature *Araucaria araucana*: Monkey puzzle tree
Credits: Ed Gilman

General Information

Scientific name: *Araucaria araucana*
Pronunciation: air-ah-KAIR-ee-uh air-ah-KAY-nuh
Common name(s): Monkey puzzle tree
Family: *Araucariaceae*
USDA hardiness zones: 7B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Invasive potential: little invasive potential
Uses: indoors; specimen
Availability: not native to North America



Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 60 to 70 feet
Spread: 30 to 35 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular
Crown shape: pyramidal

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Crown density: open
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: ovate, lanceolate
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, needled evergreen
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

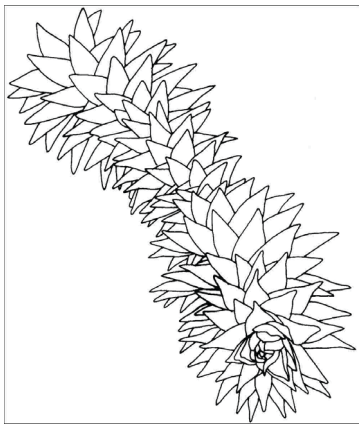


Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: unknown
Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval, cone
Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches, 6 to 12 inches
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown, tan
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically one trunk; thorns
Pruning requirement: little required
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: green, brown
Current year twig thickness: medium, thick
Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

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

Other

Roots: can form large surface roots
Winter interest: no
Outstanding tree: no
Ozone sensitivity: unknown
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown
Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Monkey puzzle tree should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil and receive regular waterings. It tolerates some drought and will grow well in clay soil.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Scales, sooty mold, leaf spots.