UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

ENH241

Araucaria bidwillii: False Monkey Puzzle Tree[1]

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson[2]

Introduction

This large evergreen has a single upright trunk, tiered branching habit, and a pyramidal or columnar shape. Eventually reaching a height of about 80 feet, false monkey puzzle possesses a moderate growth rate. The tree would grow taller, but lightning frequently limits height growth in the eastern United States. The dark green, two-inch-long, individual leaves are lanceolate when young, becoming 1/2-inch ovals at maturity. Both leaf types appear on the tree at the same time. The large, spiny, 10- to 15-pound cones are rare in cultivation.



Figure 1. Mature *Araucaria bidwillii*: False Monkey Puzzle Tree
Credits: Ed Gilman

General Information

Scientific name: *Araucaria bidwillii*
Pronunciation: air-ah-KAIR-ee-uh bid-WILL-ee-eye
Common name(s): False monkey puzzle tree
Family: *Araucariaceae*
USDA hardiness zones: 9A 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 80 feet
Spread: 15 to 25 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical
Crown shape: pyramidal, columnar

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: linear, needle-like (filiform), 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

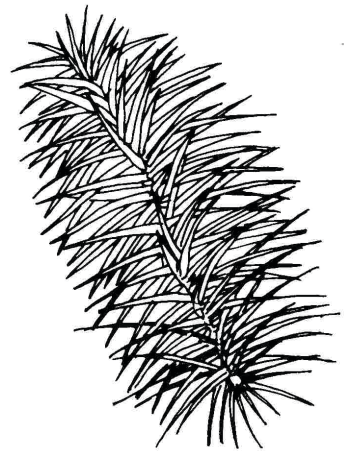


Figure 3. Foliage

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
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves 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: brown
Current year twig thickness: medium
Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

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

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

Although they provide some shade, they are not suitable for patios or terraces, because they are too large and large surface roots are common. In addition, the columnar-formed trees generally cast limited shade due to the narrow crown. Many people forget how tall these trees grow. They often have an attractive pyramidal form (like a fir or spruce tree) when they are small, but they quickly grow too tall for most residential sites. This tree is best saved for large-scale landscapes like parks and municipal buildings.

Growing best in full sun locations, this tree thrives on a variety of soils and is moderately salt tolerant. Young plants should be watered well, especially during periods of drought. Be sure to prune out multiple trunks or leaders as they should be grown with one central leader.

Propagation is by seeds or cuttings of erect shoot tips only.

Pests

Scale and sooty mold are minor problems.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern. Leaf spots are a minor problem.