UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA
IFAS Extension

ENH244

Arbutus unedo: Strawberry-Tree[1]

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

Introduction

Most often seen as a multi-stemmed, rounded, evergreen shrub or small tree reaching 8 to 15 feet in height with an equal spread, Strawberry-Tree is capable of reaching 20 to 25 feet in height, and makes a very attractive specimen tree when pruned to a short, single trunk. The trees take on a picturesque, somewhat twisted appearance over time, and exhibit dark, red/brown, flaking and shreddy bark accompanied by the lush, dark green, leathery, red-stemmed leaves. Growth rate is slow so trees over 20 feet tall are rare.

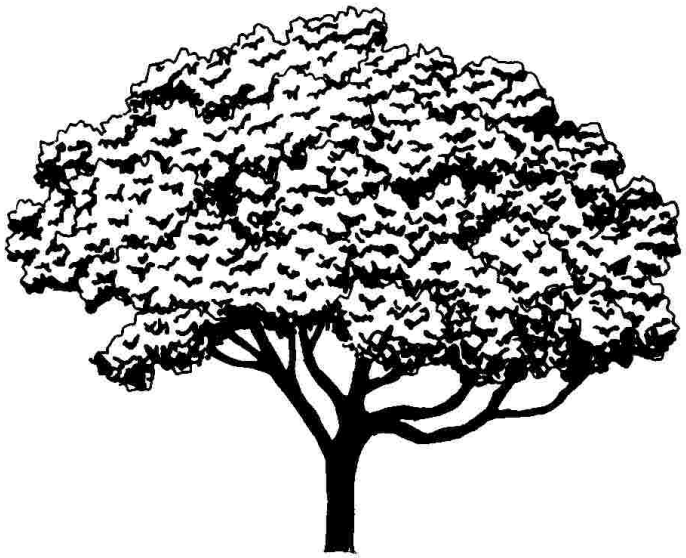


Figure 1. Mature *Arbutus unedo*: Strawberry-Tree

General Information

Scientific name: *Arbutus unedo*
Pronunciation: ar-BEW-tus YOO-nee-doe
Common name(s): Strawberry-Tree
Family: *Ericaceae*
USDA hardiness zones: 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Invasive potential: little invasive potential
Uses: tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; street without sidewalk; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; specimen; screen; hedge; deck or patio; container or planter; highway median
Availability: not native to North America



Figure 2. Range

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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Description

Height: 8 to 18 feet
Spread: 8 to 20 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical
Crown shape: round
Crown density: dense
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: serrate
Leaf shape: obovate, oblanceolate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, broadleaf evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray, pink
Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: red, yellow
Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: green, reddish
Current year twig thickness: medium
Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

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

Other

Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: yes
Outstanding tree: yes
x

Ozone sensitivity: unknown
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown
Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

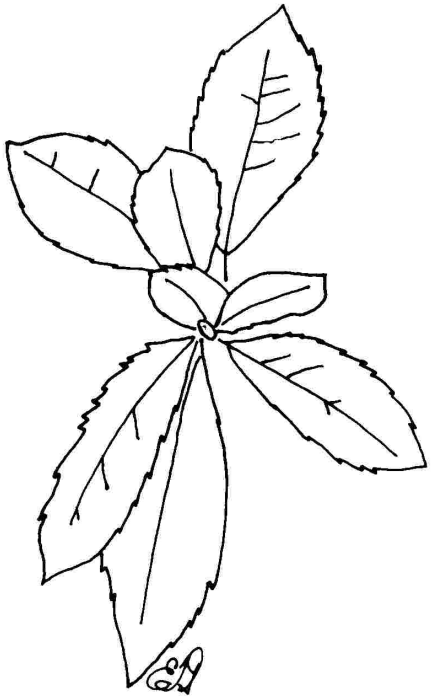


Figure 3. Foliage

Use and Management

In fall and winter, the small, white or pink blooms in two-inch-long panicles appear at the same time the previous-year's fruit are ripening. These unusual fruits have a rough, pebbled outer surface which ripen from yellow to red and persist on the tree throughout the winter, adding much to the tree's overall attractiveness. Although the fruits look appealing, their bland taste seems to be popular only with birds.

Strawberry-Tree spreads quite wide as it grows taller and produces dense shade, making it ideal for use as a small shade, screen, hedge, or patio tree. The appearance of both fruits and flowers during the winter months also makes this plant very popular for specimen plantings. It is one of the most attractive small trees available for residential use but unfortunately is not normally available in the east. It should be grown and tried in the Deep South.

Strawberry-Tree will grow at a slow pace when planted in either full sun or partial shade on well-drained, acid

soil. Plants are tolerant of wind and some drought once established and grow in well-drained clay.

The cultivar `Compacta' is a smaller shrub, six to ten feet tall and wide; `Elfin King' has a contorted, dwarf form, flowers and fruits year-round; `Rubra' has deep pink flowers.

Propagation is by seed or layering.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.