UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ PROGRAM

ENH430
doi.org/10.32473/EDIS-ST271-1993

Fraxinus velutina: Velvet Ash[1]

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Introduction

This fast-growing, deciduous, native North American tree reaches a height of 30 to 50 feet, depending upon cultural conditions. It is capable of growing taller in its native habitat. The three to six-inch-long leaves are divided into multiple leaflets and turn a brilliant yellow in fall before dropping. The inconspicuous, green, springtime flowers are followed by the production of showy, persistent fruits. The tree has been widely grown in California and in parts of the west including Texas.



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Fraxinus velutina*: Velvet Ash
Credit: Ed Gilman

General Information

Scientific name: *Fraxinus velutina*

Pronunciation: FRACK-sih-nus vell-LOO-tih-nuh

Common name(s): Velvet Ash, Modesto Ash, Arizona Ash

Family: *Oleaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7A through 8B (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: reclamation; urban tolerant; shade; street without sidewalk; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); highway median

Availability: not native to North America

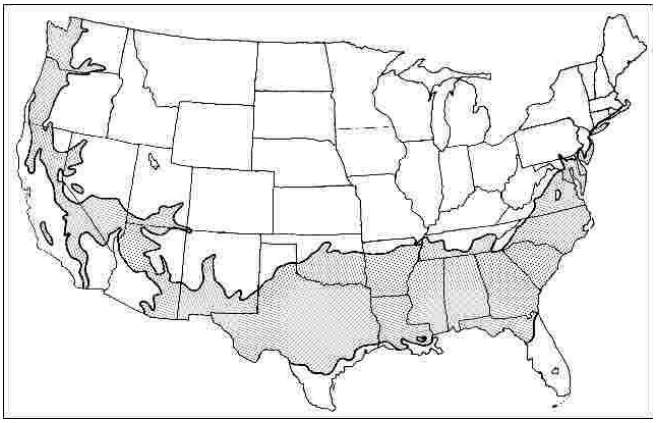


Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 30 to 50 feet

Spread: 45 to 60 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: round

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: odd-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: lanceolate, elliptic (oval)

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches, 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower
Flower color: green

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit
Fruit shape: elongated

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: green, tan

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; not showy; typically one trunk; thorns

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: susceptible to breakage

Current year twig color: gray

Current year twig thickness: medium, thick

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture
Light requirement: full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

Other
Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: tolerant

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: sensitive to pests/diseases

Use and Management
The tree has been traditionally difficult to maintain due to the development of many upright trunks originating from the same position on the main trunk. This condition has lead to the creation of weak trees which often break apart at the base of the multiple trunks. Careful pruning and branch selection is required during the first 15 years after planting to ensure good, strong trunk and branch development. It is important to purchase good quality planting stock which has a central leader and no upright multiple trunks. This will make the tree much easier to maintain in the landscape. Some horticulturists do not recommend planting this tree due to the high pruning requirement and susceptibility to breakage.

Velvet Ash should be grown in full sun on any soil and will tolerate both alkaline and rocky soils. It is tolerant of wet soil and has been extensively used along streets in areas with poor drainage. Roots often grow close to the soil surface causing a nuisance by breaking sidewalks and curbs.

The cultivar `Arizona' is widely planted but reportedly has the same problems as the species.

Propagation is easily done by seed.

Pests
It is very susceptible to borers. Trees often have a short-life.

Diseases
Texas Ash is susceptible to verticillium wilt.

[1] This document is ENH430, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu for the currently supported version of this publication. © UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 *To learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water and natural resources, visit ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/*.

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