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Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ PROGRAM

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Laburnum spp.: Goldenchain Tree[1]

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Introduction

This is an airy, graceful, deciduous tall shrub or small tree, growing to a maximum of 20 to 25 feet, with rich, yellow wisteria-like, drooping flower panicles, up to 10 inches long, which appear in late spring or early summer. The tree is truly incredible in full bloom. It is difficult to grow but if tried should be grown in a spot protected from full day sun, with very well-drained, alkaline pH soil and high organic matter. It tolerates alkaline soil but not wet soil, and does not grow well in soil below pH 7.0.



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Laburnum spp.*: Goldenchain Tree

General Information

Scientific name: *Laburnum spp.*

Pronunciation: luh-BER-num species

Common name(s): Goldenchain Tree

Family: *Leguminosae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 7B (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: specimen; deck or patio; espalier; container or planter

Availability: not native to North America

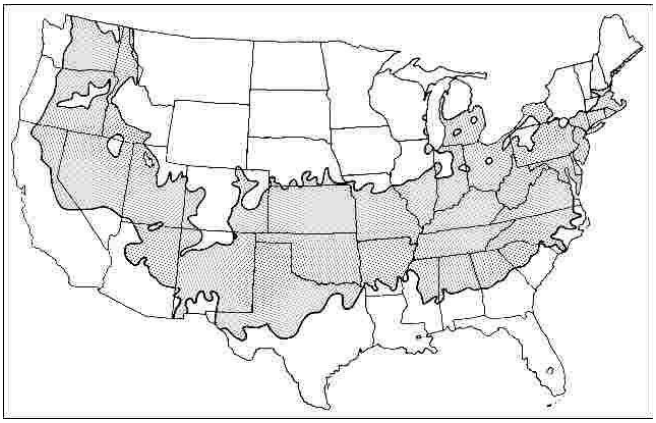

Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 20 to 25 feet

Spread: 12 to 18 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: upright/erect

Crown density: open

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: trifoliate, odd-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval), obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate, reticulate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

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

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

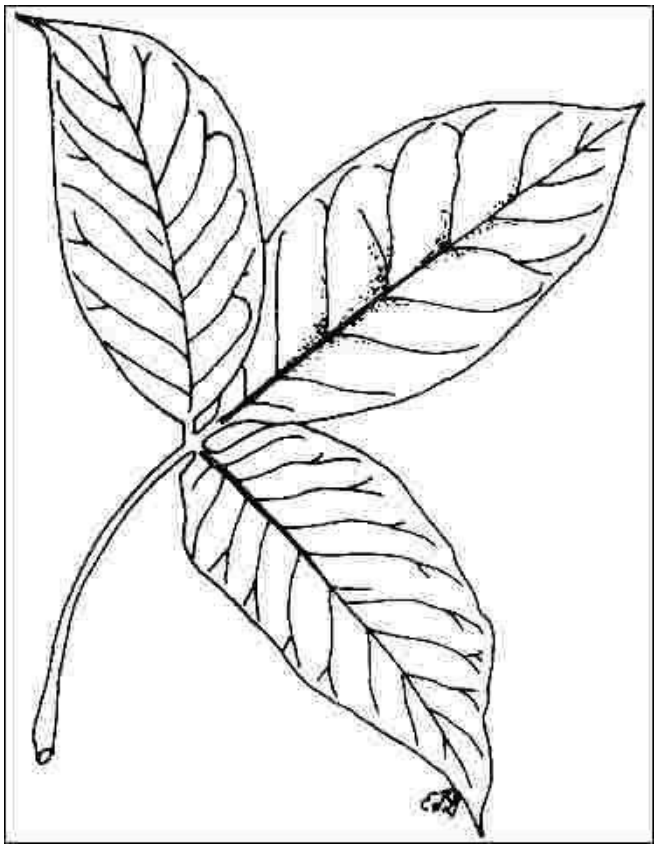

Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristics: very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated, pod or pod-like

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not 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: green

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

Soil tolerances: sand; loam; alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Goldenchain Tree is a good specimen, patio or border accent tree, and can also be espaliered against a wall. In USDA hardiness zone 7, young plants are extremely attractive but do not usually last long since the plant does not tolerate heat well. All parts of the plant are poisonous. Use as a novelty where a brightly-colored accent is needed in the spring. Do not overwater.

Laburnum alpinum is a related tree which is just as beautiful in flower.

Pests

Tree can be attacked by aphids or mealy-bugs.

Diseases

Leaf spot, laburnum vein mosaic and especially twig blight can be problems. Leaf-scald can also be a problem where bark is exposed to afternoon sun in winter. Root rot is also a problem in soil kept too moist.

[1] This document is ENH-499, 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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