

Ostrya virginiana: American Hophornbeam¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

Introduction

This shade-tolerant tree slowly grows to 50 feet in height with a 25 to 30-foot spread but is often 25 to 40 feet tall, forming an oval or round canopy. Hophornbeam has a lovely yellow fall color, and the small nutlets, which ripen in summer and fall, are used by birds and mammals during the winter. Bark is an attractive orange or grayish brown peeling off in longitudinal strips. The finely-textured crown casts a medium or dense shade in full sun, but is more open in the shade casting a light shadow.



Figure 1 . Middle-aged *Ostrya virginiana*: American Hophornbeam

Credit: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Ostrya virginiana*

Pronunciation: OSS-tree-uh ver-jin-ee-AY-nuh

Common name(s): American Hophornbeam, Eastern Hophornbeam

Family: *Betulaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 3A through 9A (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: container or planter; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; screen; specimen; reclamation; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; urban tolerant; highway median; shade

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

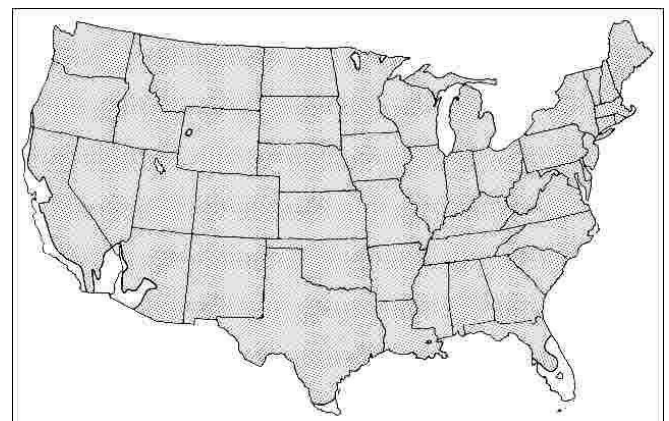


Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 30 to 40 feet

Spread: 25 to 30 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: oval, round

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: double serrate, serrate

Leaf shape: ovate, elliptic (oval)

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

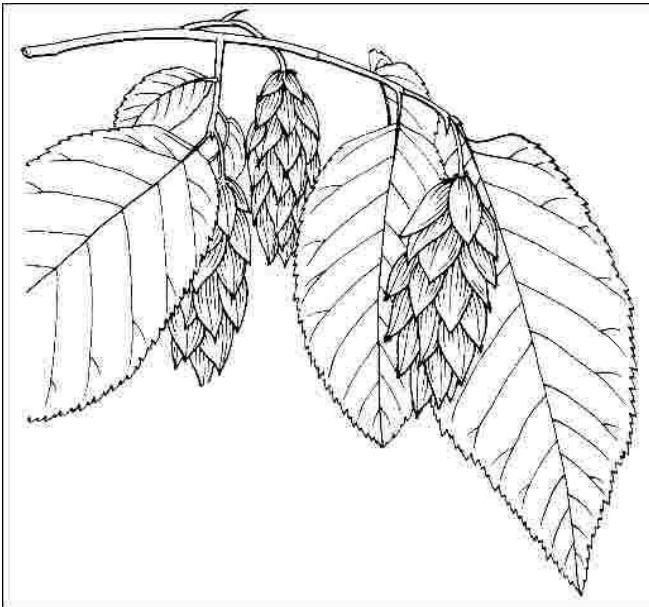


Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: brown, green

Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: green, brown

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; showy;
fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; showy;
typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial
shade, shade tolerant

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: tolerant

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

This is a rugged tree, tolerant of poor soil conditions found in urban areas and should be grown and planted more. Can be purchased as a single or multi-trunked specimen. Multi-stemmed trees have a dramatic impact in the landscape with bright bark and wonderful form. Great for climbing.

Hophornbeam has a shallow root system and will grow in most soils except those that are wet. It is well adapted to downtown city plantings provided soil drainage is

good. Often found on dry, rocky slopes with little soil, Hophornbeam is quite tolerant of drought and needs little care once established. Locate it close to people so they can enjoy the wonderful bark and foliage.

Pests

No pests of this tree are usually serious.

Two-lined chestnut borer may infest Hophornbeam. Keep trees healthy by regular fertilization and irrigate soil around tree during drought periods to reduce susceptibility to borer attack.

Scales are usually controlled with horticultural oil.

Basswood leafminer may cause some leafmining damage to foliage.

Orange-humped mapleworm may be found feeding on *Ostrya* north of Pennsylvania.

Diseases

No diseases of this tree are usually serious.

Canker diseases can cause dieback of individual branches or entire trees. Prune out diseased branches, fertilize regularly, and water during dry weather.

Leaf blister causes blistered or deformed leaves but is not something which needs control.

Leaf spots are generally not serious. Rake up and destroy infected leaves at the end of the growing season, if you wish.

Powdery mildew makes a white coating on the leaves but is otherwise harmless.

¹ This document is ENH-587, one of a series of the UF/IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Visit the Ask IFAS website at <https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication. © 2026 UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#)

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

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information, and other services only to individuals and institutions that operate in compliance with applicable federal and state non-discrimination laws and policies. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office. U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A&M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Andra Johnson, Dean for UF/IFAS Extension.