

Tabebuia impetiginosa: Purple Tabebuia¹

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Introduction

This briefly deciduous tree reaches 15 to 20 feet in height and has a fairly open canopy. Branching is often sparse allowing turf and other sun loving plants to grow beneath the canopy. The dark green, palmately compound, five-inch-long leaves are joined in late winter or early spring by the showy, trumpet-shaped blooms, appearing in dense, rose-pink to purple, terminal panicles. Trees will have a better form if trained to a single trunk and staked until they are six to eight feet tall, at which time they can be allowed to grow naturally.



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Tabebuia impetiginosa*: purple tabebuia
Credits: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Tabebuia impetiginosa*

Pronunciation: tab-eh-BOO-yuh im-pet-ih-jih-NO-suh

Common name(s): Purple tabebuia

Family: *Bignoniaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: has been evaluated using the UF/IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas (Fox et al. 2005). This species is not documented in any undisturbed natural areas in Florida. Thus, it is not considered a problem species and may be used in Florida.

Uses: specimen; street without sidewalk; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; deck or patio; container or planter

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

Description

Height: 12 to 18 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: round

Crown density: open

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Range

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: palmately compound

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: oblong, elliptic (oval)

Leaf venation: pinnate, brachidodrome

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

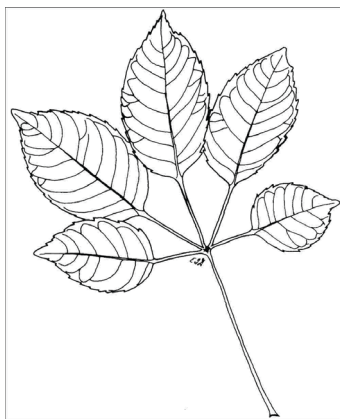


Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: purple

Flower characteristics: very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: pod or pod-like, elongated

Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches, 6 to 12 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: unknown

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

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically one trunk; thorns

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: susceptible to breakage

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: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

Use this small tree in an area where any small tree can be used. It might be best to locate it in a shrub border or other out-of-the-way place since the canopy is quite thin, even in full sun. It is probably not as well suited for specimen planting as the other tabebuias.

Purple tabebuia should be grown in full sun on almost any well-drained soil but trees respond especially well to rich soil. Established trees are highly drought-tolerant.

Propagation is by seed, cuttings, or layering. Plants flower at an early age.

Pest and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

Literature Cited

Fox, A.M., D.R. Gordon, J.A. Dusky, L. Tyson, and R.K. Stocker (2005) UF/IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas. Cited from the Internet (November 3, 2006), <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment.html>