Breynia disticha Snowbush

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

Snowbush is a rounded shrub that is used primarily for its attractive foliage (Fig. 1). This 5- to 8-foot-tall, vase-shaped to rounded plant has variegated leaves with white, green and red coloration. Plants appear to differ in foliage coloration with some showing almost whitish new growth and others with a white and green variegation. The simple leaves are somewhat two-ranked and could appear to be pinnately compound at first glance. The red branches of this shrub are slender, wiry and appear to zig-zag. Snowbush has green, petal-less flowers that occur in axillary clusters on long peduncles; the flowers are mostly inconspicuous due to the striking foliage. The fruits are red berries that are 3/8 inch wide.

General Information

Scientific name: Breynia disticha

Pronunciation: BRAY-nee-uh DISS-stick-uh

Common name(s): Snowbush

Family: Euphorbiaceae

Figure 1. Snowbush.

Plant type: shrub


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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** specimen; superior hedge; suitable for growing indoors; border; foundation; mass planting; cascading down a wall

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

**Description**

**Height:** 5 to 8 feet

**Spread:** 4 to 7 feet

**Plant habit:** round

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate; obovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** purple or red; variegated; pink

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristic:** summer flowering; fall flowering

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**Fruit**

Fruit shape: round  
Fruit length: less than .5 inch  
Fruit cover: fleshy  
Fruit color: unknown  
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy  
Current year stem/twig color: reddish  
Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

**Culture**

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun  
Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam;  
Drought tolerance: moderate  
Soil salt tolerances: poor  
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk  
Winter interest: no special winter interest  
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive  
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

**Use and Management**

This shrub may be used as a specimen and accent, and it also forms a nice hedge. Given enough room to expand its canopy, a single, unpruned specimen forms an attractive vase shape. It can also make for an accent in a shrub border. Branches are flexible enough to drape over a wall.

Snowbush will grow well on a wide range of soils but requires a full sun position in the landscape to maintain dense growth. This plant is tolerant of light, sandy soils but will not tolerate salt. Vigorous growth with regular, light fertilizer applications allows the new foliage to show it true charm.

Snowbush may be propagated by cuttings and sucker divisions.

**Pests and Diseases**

Although caterpillars and mites may be troublesome pests for Snowbush, this plant is not susceptible to any major diseases.