UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

ENH-692

Pterostyrax hispida: Fragrant Epaulette Tree[1]

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson[2]

Introduction

Fragrant Epaulette Tree is a deciduous tree which can reach 20 to 30 feet in height with an equal spread but is more often seen smaller. The three to eight-inch-long by four-inch-wide, light green, oval leaves have a silvery cast on their undersides, and the leaves turn yellow or yellow-green in fall before dropping. Of particular interest are the delicate, creamy white, slightly fragrant blooms which appear in early summer when few other trees are flowering. Hanging in nine-inch-long and four-inch-diameter clusters, these blossoms are quite striking when viewed from below so the tree should be properly situated to take advantage of this display, planting it on a bank along a walkway, in a raised bed, or above a bench. This will also allow the attractive bark to be more easily appreciated, an inner orange/tan color showing through the grey bark at expansion breaks. The seed pods which follow the pendulous blooms are grey, fuzzy, and cling to the branches throughout the winter. They are quite showy and useful in dried flower arrangements.

Figure 1. Young *Pterostyrax hispida*: Fragrant Epaulette Tree
Credits: Ed Gilman

General Information

Scientific name: *Pterostyrax hispida*
Pronunciation: teer-oh-STY-racks HISS-pih-duh
Common name(s): Fragrant Epaulette Tree, Wisteria-Tree
Family: *Styracaceae*
USDA hardiness zones: 5A through 8A (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Invasive potential: little invasive potential
Uses: deck or patio; specimen; shade
Availability: not native to North America

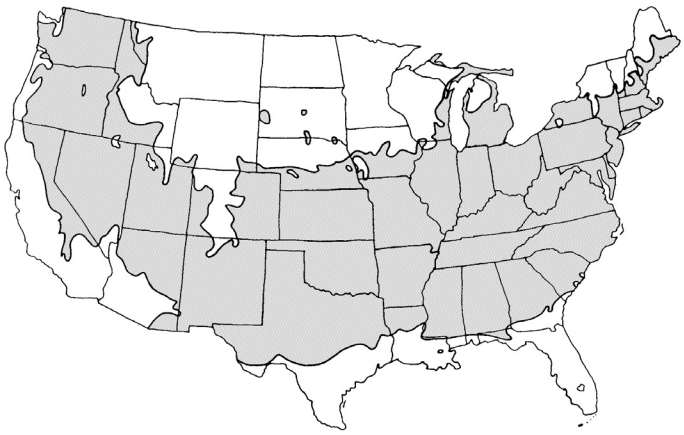

Figure 2. Range

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Description

Height: 20 to 30 feet
Spread: 20 to 30 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular
Crown shape: vase, spreading
Crown density: dense
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: pectinate, serrate
Leaf shape: oblong, ovate
Leaf venation: brachidodrome, pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: yellow
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray
Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: gray
Current year twig thickness: thin, medium
Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

Other

Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: yes
Outstanding tree: yes
Ozone sensitivity: unknown
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

The wide-spreading, upright-spreading branches help to make this a fabulous small shade tree, casting deep shade beneath the tree. Some early pruning may be necessary to remove the lower branches (to allow easier access below the tree) or to control the tree's shape. Seek out this little-known tree for a specimen or group planting which is not likely to be duplicated in the near future due to the rarity of the tree.

Fragrant Epaulette Tree should be grown in full sun on moist, well-drained soil. It will tolerate both acid and alkaline soils. The trees perform best when they receive no shade, becoming thin and flowering poorly in the shade.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.