

Ptelea trifoliata 'Aurea': 'Aurea' Common Hoptree¹

Edward F. Gilman, Dennis G. Watson, Ryan W. Klein, and Deborah R. Hilbert²

Introduction

This cultivar of the deciduous North American native tree reaches 15 feet in height with a spread of 10 to 15 feet and forms a broad, rounded canopy over a slender, grey trunk. The trifoliate, four- to six-inch-long leaves emerge a bright yellow changing to light green in summer, turning yellow in fall before dropping. Inconspicuous greenish-white flowers appear in terminal clusters in June and July, their presence easily detected by the delicious orange blossom-like perfume. The blooms are followed by interesting, one-inch-diameter, flattened, tan "wafers" which will persist on the tree if not first consumed by wildlife. In the past, this bitter fruit was used as a substitute for hops in brewing beer.

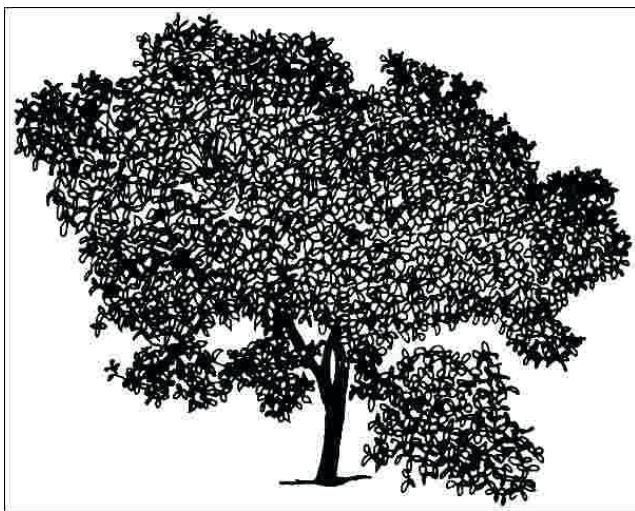


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Ptelea trifoliata* 'Aurea': 'Aurea' common hoptree.
Credits: UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Ptelea trifoliata*

Pronunciation: TEE-lee-uh try-fole-ee-AY-tuh

Common name(s): 'Aurea' common hoptree, 'Aurea' wafer-ash

Family: *Rutaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 4A through 9A (Figure 2)

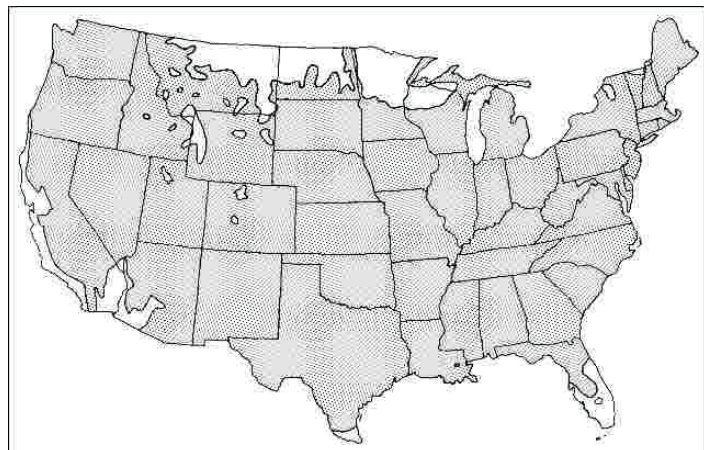


Figure 2. Range.

Credits: UF/IFAS

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: native cultivar

1. This document is ENH-689, one of a series of the Department of Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006 and Revised March 2024. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor emeritus; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering; Ryan W. Klein, assistant professor, arboriculture; and Deborah R. Hilbert, UF/IFAS Gulf Coast Research and Education Center; Department of Environmental Horticulture; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

Uses: specimen; deck or patio; container or planter

Description

Height: 5 to 15 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: round, vase

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Figure 3)

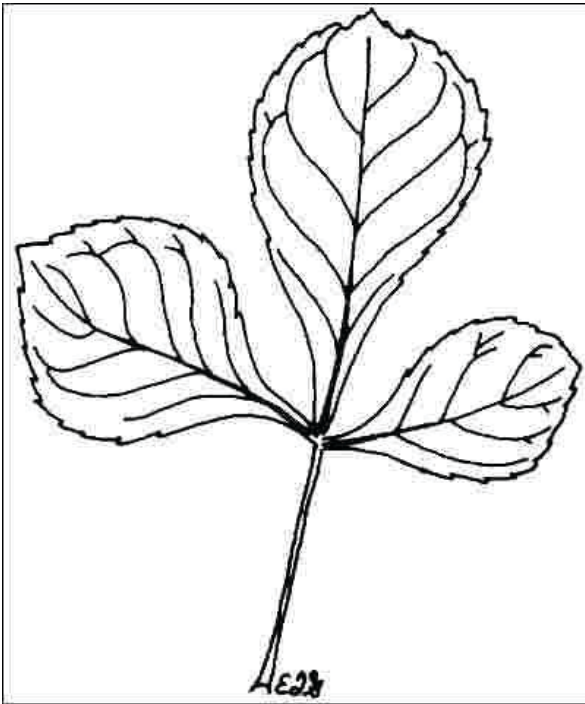


Figure 3. Foliage.

Credits: UF/IFAS

Leaf type: trifoliate, odd-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: entire, serrate

Leaf shape: ovate, elliptic (oval), oblong

Leaf venation: brachidodrome, pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: yellow, green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: 0.5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

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

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

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

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

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

One of a few small trees which performs well in deep shade. Plant it close to the patio or deck, or locate it in a shrub border for fragrant flowers and yellow fall color display. Its native habitat is dry, rocky upland sites making it well-suited for non-irrigated landscapes.

Naturally found in the shade along the edges of woods, especially on rocky slopes in the Mississippi Valley, wafer-ash can be planted in full sun to deep shade and prefers well-drained, fertile, moist soil. While plants are better off if not exposed to extremes of wetness or dryness, wafer-ash is drought-tolerant once established. Transplants readily from the field.

Other cultivars include: 'Glaucua' with blue/green foliage.

Propagation is by seed, budding, layering, or grafting.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern although it is occasionally bothered by tree-hoppers, leaf spot, and rust.