

# *Cotinus coggygia* 'Velvet Cloak': 'Velvet Cloak' Smoketree<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

This slow growing, open-crown, round, small tree eventually reaches to 10 to 15 feet tall (occasionally 20) and 12 to 15 feet wide. The large panicles of wispy purple-colored flowers produced in spring and early summer give the effect of a cloud of smoke. They make a wonderful accent in a shrub border and can be planted as a specimen or as a patio tree where the black, showy, multiple trunk can be displayed. Planting Smoketree is a good way to extend the spring flowering-tree season into the summer before the Crape-Myrtles come into full bloom. This cultivar has deep red-purple foliage which does not turn green in the summer. Fall color is usually a spectacular red-purple. Many people grow it simply to enjoy the vivid fall color.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Cotinus coggygia*

**Pronunciation:** koe-TYE-nus koe-GUY-gree-uh

**Common name(s):** 'Velvet Cloak' Smoketree, 'Velvet Cloak' Wig-Tree, 'Velvet Cloak' Smokebush

**Family:** *Anacardiaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5B through 8B (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential

**Uses:** specimen; deck or patio; street without sidewalk; container or planter; reclamation; trained as a standard; screen; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island

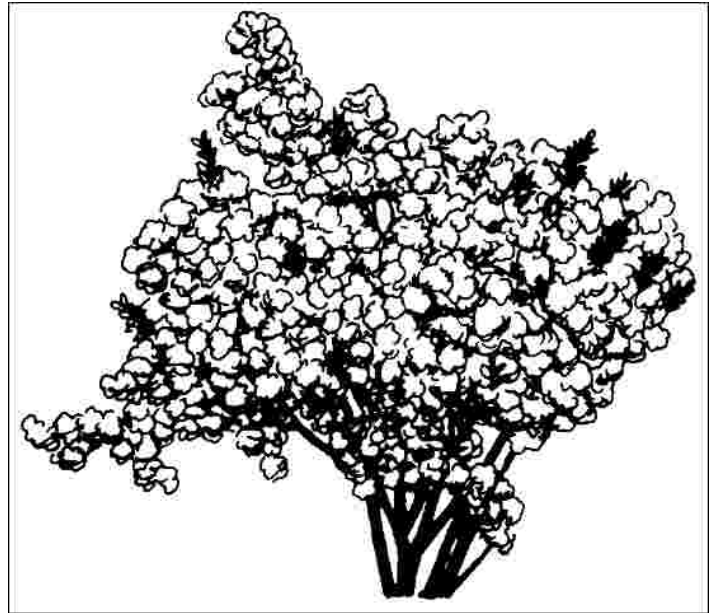


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Cotinus coggygia* 'Velvet Cloak': 'Velvet Cloak' Smoketree

100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median

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

## Description

**Height:** 10 to 15 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

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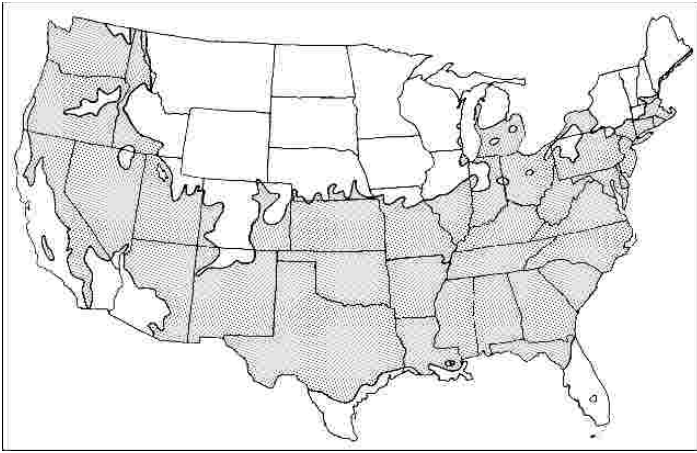


Figure 2. Range

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical

**Crown shape:** round

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** obovate, elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** reticulate, pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** purple/red

**Fall color:** red, purple

**Fall characteristic:** showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** purple, white/cream/gray

**Flower characteristics:** very showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval, irregular

**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:** little required

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown

**Current year twig thickness:** medium, thick

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; acidic; alkaline; 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:** susceptible

**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

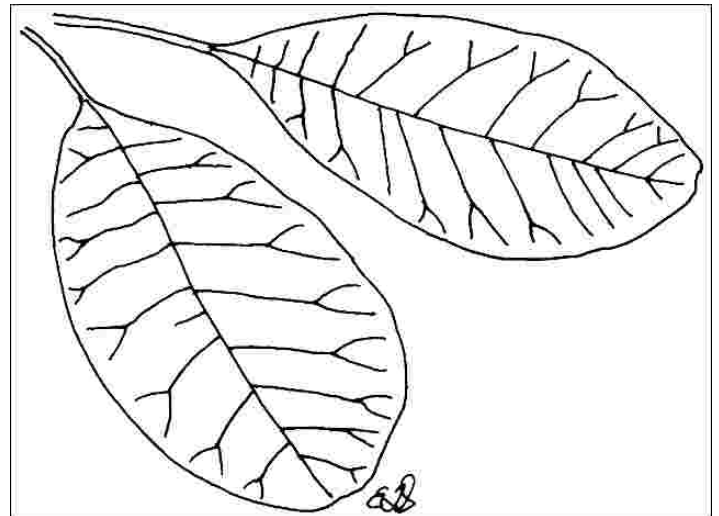


Figure 3. Foliage

## Use and Management

The tree is tough and adapts to restricted soil spaces. It could be used along a street under power lines and would not require pruning for many years. It is a small tree, well-adapted to urban areas with almost year-round interest which should be used more in our landscapes.

Smoketree grows best in a sunny location and a well-drained loam. It will grow asymmetrically and lean toward the light in a partially sunny area, so it is best to locate it in full day sun where the crown will develop symmetrically. Though sometimes short-lived in rich soil, Smoketree is useful in dry, rocky soil where there is no irrigation. It also grows in a wide range of soil pH, including alkaline. Probably short-lived (20 years - maybe more) in most situations but who cares - the tree is great while it's around!

Propagation of cultivars is by cuttings.

Cultivars include: 'Daydream' - heavy production of panicles, dense habit of growth; 'Flame' - brilliant orange-red fall color, pink inflorescences; 'Nordine' - resembles 'Royal Purple'; 'Notcutt's Variety' - dark maroon-purple leaves (also known as 'Foliis Purpureis Notcutt's Variety' and 'Rubrifolius'); 'Purpureus' - leaves bronze-green, inflorescences purplish-pink; 'Royal Purple' - leaves are darker purple than 'Notcutt's Variety', rich red-purple fall color, purplish-red inflorescences; 'Pendulus' - pendulous branches.

## Pests

Oblique-banded leaf roller mines and rolls the leaves, usually in June. The insect rarely occurs in sufficient numbers to warrant control. When it does occur they can be picked off by hand or sprayed with *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

## Diseases

Leaf spots can be caused by various genera of fungi but are usually not serious.

Scab may cause leaf drop. No controls are listed.

The most serious disease is Verticillium wilt. Smoketree is very susceptible, and entire branches wilt and die. Prune out infected branches, fertilize, and water the plant during dry weather.

A stem canker can be a problem in the eastern U.S.