

Fraxinus velutina: Velvet Ash¹

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Introduction

This fast-growing, deciduous, native North American tree reaches a height of 30 to 50 feet, depending upon cultural conditions. It is capable of growing taller in its native habitat. The three to six-inch-long leaves are divided into multiple leaflets and turn a brilliant yellow in fall before dropping. The inconspicuous, green, springtime flowers are followed by the production of showy, persistent fruits. The tree has been widely grown in California and in parts of the west including Texas.

General Information

Scientific name: *Fraxinus velutina*

Pronunciation: FRACK-sih-nus vell-LOO-tih-nuh

Common name(s): Velvet Ash, Modesto Ash, Arizona Ash

Family: *Oleaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7A through 8B (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: reclamation; urban tolerant; shade; street without sidewalk; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); highway median

Availability: not native to North America

Description

Height: 30 to 50 feet

Spread: 45 to 60 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: round

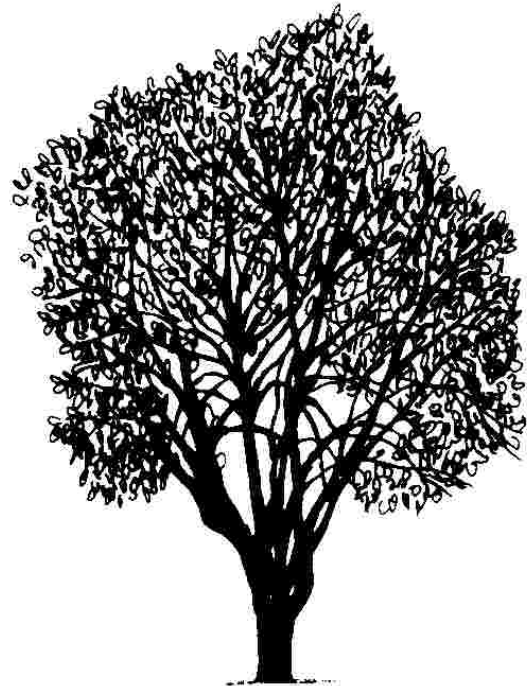


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Fraxinus velutina*: Velvet Ash

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: odd-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: lanceolate, elliptic (oval)

1. This document is ENH430, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed May 2011. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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Figure 2. Range

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches, 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: green

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: green, tan

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

Trunk and Branches

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

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: susceptible to breakage

Current year twig color: gray

Current year twig thickness: medium, thick

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: tolerant

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: sensitive to pests/diseases

Use and Management

The tree has been traditionally difficult to maintain due to the development of many upright trunks originating from the same position on the main trunk. This condition has led to the creation of weak trees which often break apart at the base of the multiple trunks. Careful pruning and branch selection is required during the first 15 years after planting to ensure good, strong trunk and branch development. It is important to purchase good quality planting stock which has a central leader and no upright multiple trunks. This will make the tree much easier to maintain in the landscape. Some horticulturists do not recommend planting this tree due to the high pruning requirement and susceptibility to breakage.

Velvet Ash should be grown in full sun on any soil and will tolerate both alkaline and rocky soils. It is tolerant of wet soil and has been extensively used along streets in areas with poor drainage. Roots often grow close to the soil surface causing a nuisance by breaking sidewalks and curbs.

The cultivar 'Arizona' is widely planted but reportedly has the same problems as the species.

Propagation is easily done by seed.

Pests

It is very susceptible to borers. Trees often have a short-life.

Diseases

Texas Ash is susceptible to verticillium wilt.