Osmanthus americanus: Devilwood

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Introduction
A native to the southeastern United States, Devilwood is a very attractive, small evergreen tree which is most commonly seen at 15 to 25 feet in height and sports lush, dark, olive green leaves throughout the year. It is occasionally seen 30 to 40 feet tall in its native habitat and grows slowly. The clusters of small, white, fragrant, early springtime flowers are followed by the production of small, dark blue drupes, ripening in fall and persisting on the tree until the following spring, if not first consumed by birds and other wildlife. Its ease of growth, pest-resistance, attractive foliage and flowers, and wildlife-attracting fruits would make Devilwood a popular choice for naturalizing or the mixed shrubbery border. The trees tolerate heavy pruning particularly well and may also be used as a hedge. Devilwood is so-named because the fine-textured wood is difficult to split and hard to work.

General Information
Scientific name: *Osmanthus americanus*

Pronunciation: oz-MANTH-us uh-mair-ih-KAY-nus

Common name(s): Devilwood, Wild-Olive

Family: Oleaceae

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 9B (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: hedge; screen; reclamation; deck or patio; highway median; street without sidewalk; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 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; specimen

Availability: not native to North America

Figure 1. Young *Osmanthus americanus*: Devilwood

Credits: Ed Gilman

Figure 2. Range
Osmanthus americanus: Devilwood

**Description**

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet  
**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical  
**Crown shape:** vase, round  
**Crown density:** dense  
**Growth rate:** moderate  
**Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** lanceolate, ovate, elliptic (oval)  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

![Figure 3. Foliage](image)

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun or partial shade  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; acidic; extended flooding; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** high

**Other**

**Roots:** not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no  
**Outstanding tree:** yes  
**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown  
**Pest resistance:** free of serious pests and diseases

**Use and Management**

Naturally found along streambanks or swamp margins, Devilwood should be grown in full sun or partial shade on moist, well-drained soil. Drought tolerance is moderate once established. The tree is probably as shade tolerant as any osmanthus. Not tested as an urban tree but may have some merit in wet soils.

Propagation is by cuttings or seed, and is difficult by either.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** oval  
**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** blue  
**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** little required  
**Breakage:** resistant  
**Current year twig color:** green, brown  
**Current year twig thickness:** thick  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown