

Osmanthus x fortunei: Fortunes Osmanthus¹

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Introduction

This large evergreen shrub or small tree is capable of reaching 15 to 20 feet in height and width but is most often seen at 10 to 12 feet high with an 8-foot-spread. Older plants grow as wide as tall and develop a vase shape with several main trunks typically originating close to the ground. The lustrous, dark-green leaves have paler undersides and are joined in the fall by a multitude of barely-noticeable, but extremely fragrant, white blossoms. They perfume a large area of the landscape.

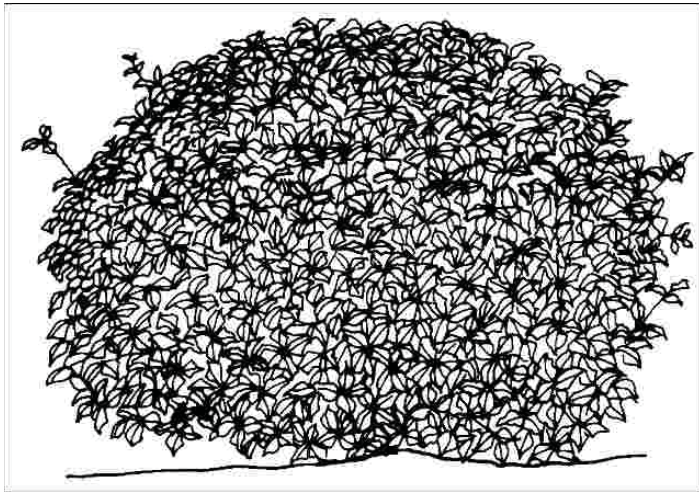


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Osmanthus x fortunei*: Fortunes Osmanthus

General Information

Scientific name: *Osmanthus x fortunei*

Pronunciation: oz-MANTH-us x for-TOO-nee-eye

Common name(s): Fortunes Osmanthus

Family: *Oleaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7A through 9B (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: has been evaluated using the IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas (Fox et al. 2005). This species is not documented in any undisturbed natural areas in Florida. Thus, it is not considered a problem species and may be used in Florida.

Uses: hedge; screen; specimen; container or planter

Availability: not native to North America

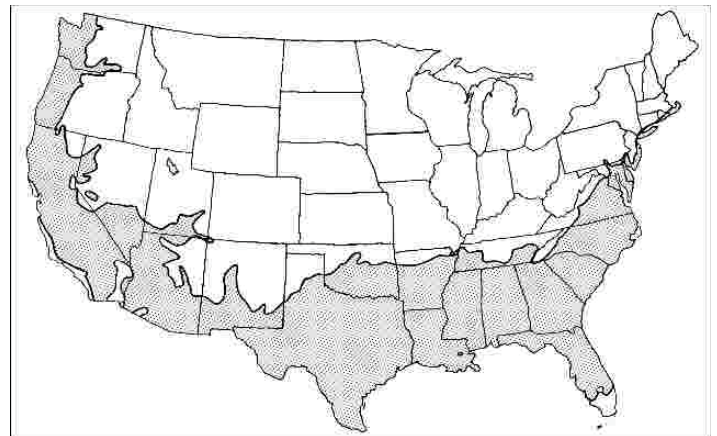


Figure 2. Range

1. This document is ENH-585, 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 March 2007. Reviewed May 2011. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Description

Height: 15 to 20 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: oval

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: spiny, serrate, pectinate

Leaf shape: ovate, elliptic (oval)

Leaf venation: pinnate, brachidodrome

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: black

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

Trunk and Branches

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

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: gray

Current year twig thickness: thin, medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

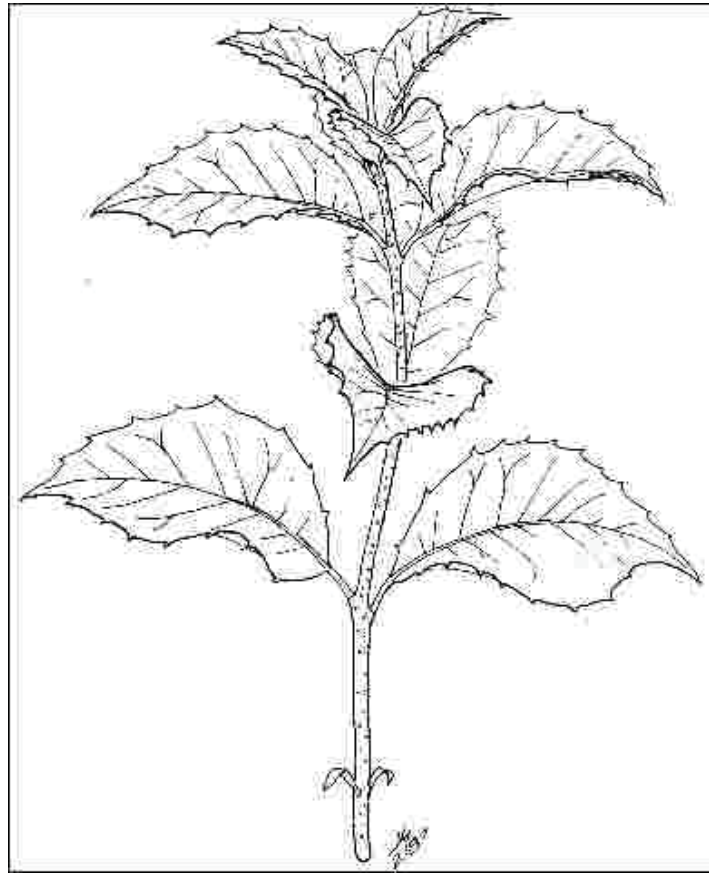


Figure 3. Foliage

Use and Management

With its upright oval to columnar growth habit in youth, Osmanthus is ideal for use as an unclipped hedge or trained as a small tree, and should be placed where its fragrance can be enjoyed. It is often planted as a hedge or foundation plant, and makes a very effect screen. Its spiny foliage makes it well-suited for planting as a barrier to help keep people from walking through an area. Since the flowers are not particularly showy, people will wonder where the delightful fragrance is coming from. This is a subtle plant which should be used more often in Southern landscapes.

Plants thin somewhat in full shade, but form a dense crown in a sunny or partially shaded location. Planted on 4 to 6 foot centers, Osmanthus can form a wall of fragrance during the fall and should be planted more often. They will not grow as fast as Leyland Cypress, but think of this Osmanthus as a substitute for use in a sunny or partially shaded spot. Plants can be clipped to form a denser canopy, but flowers form on old growth and removing branches will

reduce the flower display. With time, older plants can be trained into a small, multi-trunked tree.

Osmanthus should be grown in sun or shade in well-drained soil. Plants are drought-tolerant once established. This is one of the most cold tolerant Osmanthus.

Propagation is by cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Scales and nematodes may present a problem, and mushroom root rot is troublesome when the soil is kept too wet.

Literature Cited

Fox, A.M., D.R. Gordon, J.A. Dusky, L. Tyson, and R.K. Stocker (2005) IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas. Cited from the Internet (November 3, 2006), <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment.html>.