

## ***Osmanthus x fortunei*: Fortunes Osmanthus<sup>1</sup>**

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

### **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.

### **General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Osmanthus x fortunei*

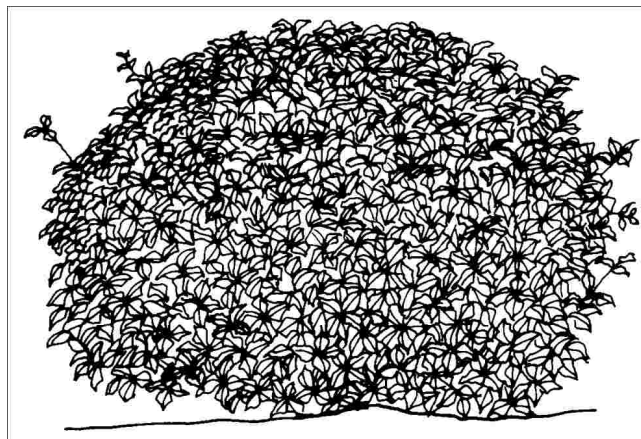
**Pronunciation:** oz-MANTH-us x for-TOO-nee-eye

**Common name(s):** Fortunes Osmanthus

**Family:** *Oleaceae*

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

**Origin:** not native to North America



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

**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

1. This document is ENH-585, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date November 1993. Revised March 2007. Reviewed October 2003. Visit the EDIS Web Site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.  
 2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.

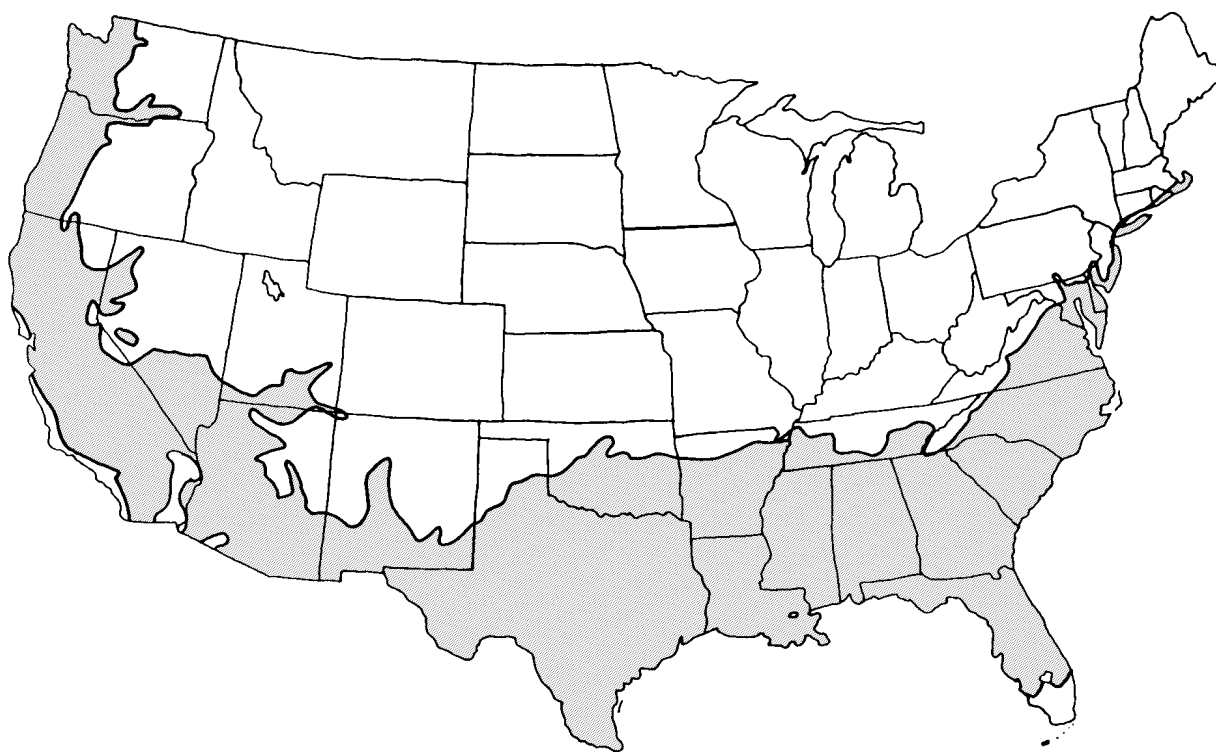


Figure 2. Range

### 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

**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

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** spiny, serrate, pectinate

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

**Leaf venation:** pinnate, brachidodrome

### 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

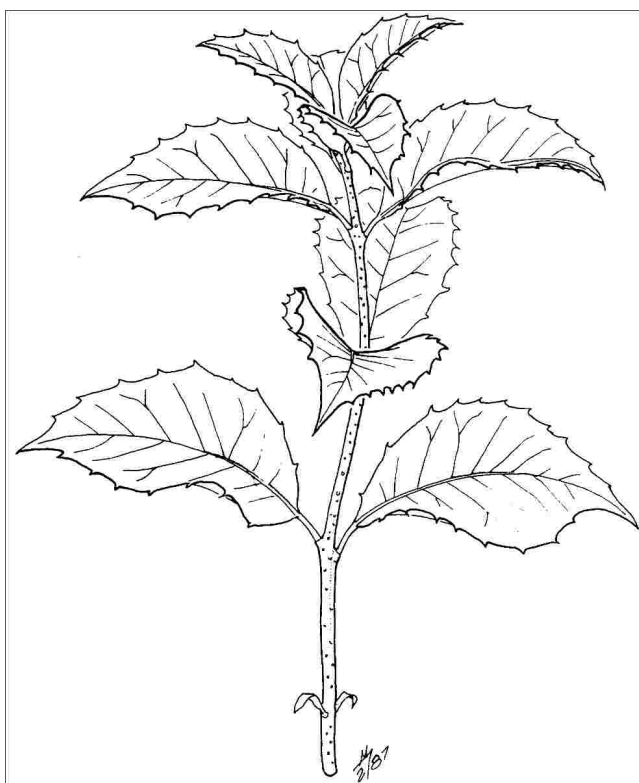
**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown

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

### 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.



**Figure 3.** Foliage

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>