Phellodendron amurense: Amur Corktree¹
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Introduction
Growing 30 to 40 feet tall with an equal or much greater spread, Amur Corktree has a short trunk and an open, rounded, spreading canopy which makes it ideal as a durable shade tree. Male clones can be used for street and parking lot planting because they produce no fruit. The deciduous, dark green, pinnately compound leaflets change to bronze and yellow in the fall before dropping. The insignificant yellow/green flowers appear in late May to early June on 2 to 3.5-inch-long panicles, and are followed by small black drupes which sometimes persist into winter, if not first devoured by birds. These black fruits give off a strong odor when crushed and create a mess on a sidewalk and some people may find it more desirable to only plant male trees (‘Macho’) which will not produce this fruit. The species can naturalize as seeds readily germinate in the landscape.

General Information
Scientific name: Phellodendron amurense
Pronunciation: fell-oh-DEN-drawn am-moor-EN-see
Common name(s): Amur Corktree, Chinese Corktree
Family: Rutaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 3B through 8B (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Invasive potential: invasive non-native
Uses: specimen; shade; street without sidewalk; urban tolerant; highway median
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

Figure 1. Middle-aged Phellodendron amurense: Amur Corktree
Credits: Ed Gilman

Figure 2. Range
**Description**

**Height:** 30 to 40 feet  
**Spread:** 40 to 60 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular  
**Crown shape:** vase, round, spreading  
**Crown density:** open  
**Growth rate:** moderate  
**Texture:** medium

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**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** odd-pinnately compound  
**Leaf margin:** entire, undulate  
**Leaf shape:** ovate, elliptic (oval)  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate, reticulate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** copper, yellow  
**Fall characteristic:** showy

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**Flower**

**Flower color:** white/cream/gray, green  
**Flower characteristics:** not showy

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**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** oval  
**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch, .5 to 1 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** black, green  
**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

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**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure  
**Breakage:** resistant  
**Current year twig color:** gray, brown  
**Current year twig thickness:** thick  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

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**Culture**

**Light requirement:** full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

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**Other**

**Roots:** can form large surface roots  
**Winter interest:** yes  
**Outstanding tree:** yes  
**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible  
**Pest resistance:** free of serious pests and diseases

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**Use and Management**

The attractive grey/brown bark is deeply ridged and furrowed, and on mature trees it takes on a corky texture. Branches are usually borne low on the trunk, droop and grow horizontally forming a spreading habit. The shallow root system needs plenty of room to expand in order to establish the tree properly.

The fruitless (male) cultivar 'Macho' has thick, leathery leaves and a more pleasing, upright-spreading growth form. 'Macho' should be planted instead of the species due to its less spreading and less drooping habit which makes it more suited for street tree planting. Pruning usually is not required once good branch structure is established early in the life of the tree. Allow for adequate soil space for root development so they do not lift sidewalks and pavement. ‘Shademaster’ is also fruitless and available in the trade.

Amur Corktree grows rapidly and prefers to be grown in full sun on deep, rich soil but will tolerate any soil, acid or alkaline. It tolerates wet soil and drought. Once highly recommended as a street and urban-tolerant tree, it does not appear to hold up to the rigors of city life under certain conditions, particularly restricted soil spaces (although the experts appear to disagree as to the tolerance of this tree to city life - the tree may be more sensitive to soil conditions than is commonly realized).

**Propagation** is by seed, which germinate readily.

**Pests and Diseases**

This tree is virtually pest-free.