

***Prunus cerasifera* 'Atropurpurea': Pissard Plum¹**

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Introduction

Purple-leaved plum has new foliage which unfolds as ruby red, then turns reddish-purple, and finally matures to greenish-bronze by the end of the summer. Its fast growth rate and upright to upright-spreading nature quickly forms a 15 to 25-foot-tall, dense silhouette. The small, white to light pink, springtime flowers, which usually appear before the leaves unfold, are followed by a heavy crop of edible, one-inch-diameter purple fruits. They make a temporary mess beneath the tree as they mature and drop during the summer.

General Information

Scientific name: *Prunus cerasifera*

Pronunciation: PROO-nus sair-uh-SIFF-er-uh

Common name(s): Pissard Plum, `Atropurpurea'
Cherry Plum

Family: *Rosaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 8A (Fig. 2)

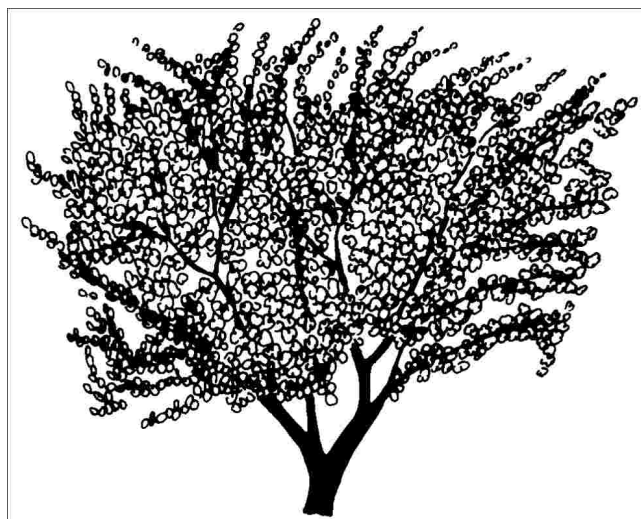


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Prunus cerasifera* 'Atropurpurea': Pissard Plum

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: specimen; container or planter; Bonsai; shade

Availability: not native to North America

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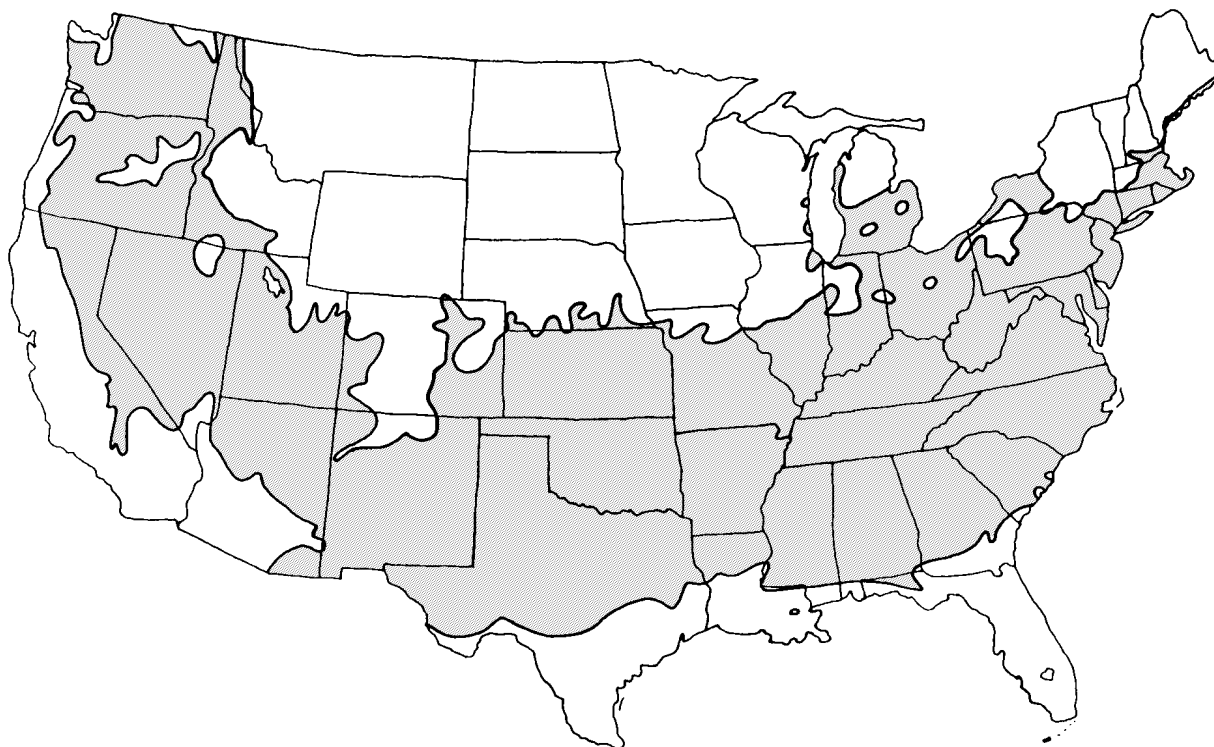


Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: round, vase

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: ovate, elliptic (oval), obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate, brachidodrome

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

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

Leaf color: purple/red

Fall color: purple

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray, pink

Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: purple

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; not showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

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

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: reddish, brown

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: sensitive to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Very popular due to the unusual leaf color, many gardeners want one of these things in their yard. But one plant really attracts attention to an area, and it can be overpowering in a small landscape creating a cramped feeling. Due to the strong effect, best used in a large-scale landscape as a single specimen, not in a row or mass planting. It makes a nice, small ornamental near the deck or patio but locate it far enough away so dropping fruit will fall on the lawn or in a groundcover bed. Do not rely on this tree to be around for a long time since decline often begins by the time the tree is 10 to 15-years-old.

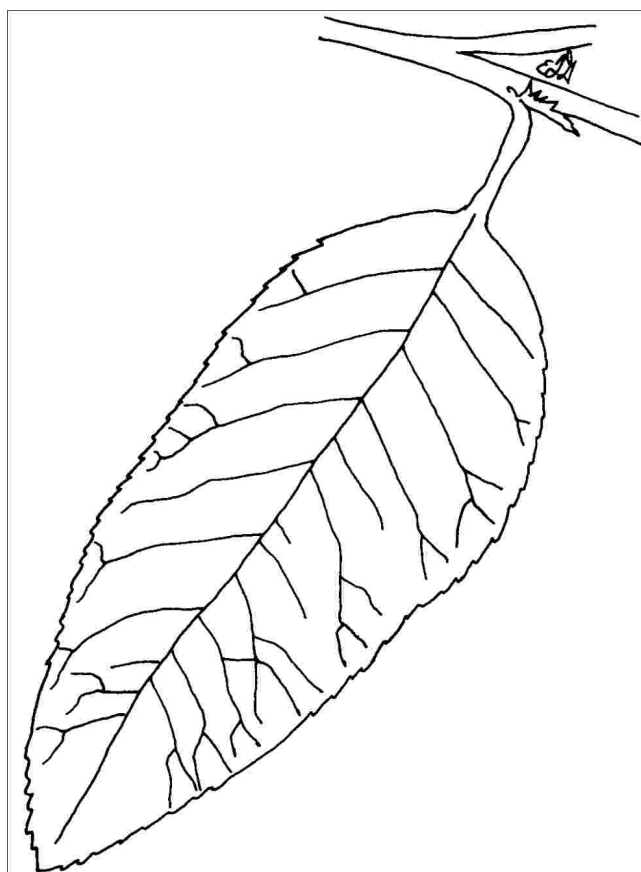


Figure 3. Foliage

Purple-leaved plum should be grown in full sun to bring out the richest color of the leaves. Leaves turn almost green in shade and lose the characteristic purple which the buyer is usually looking for. Well-drained soil with an acid pH is preferred but it will grow on slightly alkaline soil. Tolerant of moderate heat and drought, it often succumbs to borers on poor, compacted soil.

Propagation is by cuttings.

Pests

Some of its pests are aphids, borers, scales, mealy bugs, tent caterpillars and many others. This is not a pest-free plant.

Diseases

Pissard plum may be infected with canker and leaf spots.