**Ptelea trifoliata** ‘Glauca’: ‘Glauca’ Common Hoptree

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

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**Introduction**

This cultivar of the deciduous North American native tree reaches 15 feet in height with a spread of 10 to 15 feet and forms a broad, rounded canopy over a slender, grey trunk. The trifoliate, four to six-inch-long leaves are glaucous blue-green in summer, turning yellow in fall before dropping. Inconspicuous greenish-white flowers appear in terminal clusters in June and July, their presence easily detected by the delicious orange blossom-like perfume. The blooms are followed by interesting, one-inch-diameter, flattened, tan “wafers” which will persist on the tree if not first consumed by wildlife. In the past, this bitter fruit was used as a substitute for hops in brewing beer.

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**General Information**

- **Scientific name**: Ptelea trifoliata
- **Pronunciation**: TEE-lee-uh try-fole-ee-AY-tah
- **Common name(s)**: ‘Glauca’ Common Hoptree, ‘Glauca’ Wafer-Ash
- **Family**: Rutaceae
- **USDA hardiness zones**: 4A through 9A (Fig. 2)
- **Origin**: native to North America
- **Invasive potential**: little invasive potential
- **Uses**: specimen; deck or patio; container or planter
- **Availability**: not native to North America

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**Description**

- **Height**: 5 to 15 feet
- **Spread**: 10 to 15 feet
- **Crown uniformity**: irregular
- **Crown shape**: round, vase

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**Foliage**
- **Leaf arrangement**: alternate (Fig. 3)
- **Leaf type**: trifoliate, odd-pinnately compound
- **Leaf margin**: entire, serrate
- **Leaf shape**: ovate, elliptic (oval), oblong
- **Leaf venation**: brachidodrome, pinnate
- **Leaf type and persistence**: deciduous
- **Leaf blade length**: 2 to 4 inches
- **Leaf color**: blue or blue-green
- **Fall color**: yellow
- **Fall characteristic**: showy

*Figure 3. Foliage*

**Flower**
- **Flower color**: white/cream/gray
- **Flower characteristics**: not showy

**Fruit**
- **Fruit shape**: round
- **Fruit length**: .5 to 1 inch
- **Fruit covering**: dry or hard
- **Fruit color**: brown
- **Fruit characteristics**: attracts squirrels/mammals; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**
- **Trunk/bark/branches**: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
- **Pruning requirement**: needed for strong structure
- **Breakage**: resistant
- **Current year twig color**: brown
- **Current year twig thickness**: medium
- **Wood specific gravity**: unknown

**Culture**
- **Light requirement**: full sun, partial sun or partial shade, shade tolerant

**Soil tolerances**: clay; sand; loam; acidic; slightly alkaline; well-drained
- **Drought tolerance**: high
- **Aerosol salt tolerance**: unknown

**Other**
- **Roots**: not a problem
- **Winter interest**: no
- **Outstanding tree**: yes
- **Ozone sensitivity**: unknown
- **Verticillium wilt susceptibility**: unknown
- **Pest resistance**: resistant to pests/diseases

**Use and Management**
One of a few small trees which performs well in deep shade. Plant it close to the patio or deck, or locate it in a shrub border for fragrant flowers and yellow fall color display. Its native habitat is dry, rocky upland sites making it well-suited for non-irrigated landscapes.

Naturally found in the shade along the edges of woods, especially on rocky slopes in the Mississippi Valley, Wafer-Ash can be planted in full sun to deep shade and prefers well-drained, fertile, moist soil. While plants are better off if not exposed to extremes of wetness or dryness, Wafer-Ash is drought-tolerant once established. Transplants readily from the field.

Other cultivars include: `Aurea' with yellow foliage through the spring and into the summer.

Propagation is by budding, layering, or grafting.

**Pests and Diseases**
No pests or diseases are of major concern although it is occasionally bothered by tree-hoppers, leaf spot, and rust.