**Pterostyrax hispida: Fragrant Epaulette Tree**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

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**Introduction**

Fragrant Epaulette Tree is a deciduous tree which can reach 20 to 30 feet in height with an equal spread but is more often seen smaller. The three to eight-inch-long by four-inch-wide, light green, oval leaves have a silvery cast on their undersides, and the leaves turn yellow or yellow-green in fall before dropping. Of particular interest are the delicate, creamy white, slightly fragrant blooms which appear in early summer when few other trees are flowering. Hanging in nine-inch-long and four-inch-diameter clusters, these blossoms are quite striking when viewed from below so the tree should be properly situated to take advantage of this display, planting it on a bank along a walkway, in a raised bed, or above a bench. This will also allow the attractive bark to be more easily appreciated, an inner orange/tan color showing through the grey bark at expansion breaks. The seed pods which follow the pendulous blooms are grey, fuzzy, and cling to the branches throughout the winter. They are quite showy and useful in dried flower arrangements.

**General Information**

- **Scientific name:** *Pterostyrax hispida*
- **Pronunciation:** teer-oh-STY-racks HISS-pih-duh
- **Common name(s):** Fragrant Epaulette Tree, Wisteria-Tree
- **Family:** Styracaceae
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 5A through 8A (Fig. 2)
- **Origin:** not native to North America
- **Invasive potential:** little invasive potential
- **Uses:** deck or patio; specimen; shade
- **Availability:** not native to North America

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**Description**

Height: 20 to 30 feet  
Spread: 20 to 30 feet  
Crown uniformity: irregular  
Crown shape: vase, spreading  
Crown density: dense  
Growth rate: moderate  
Texture: coarse

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: pectinate, serrate  
Leaf shape: oblong, ovate  
Leaf venation: brachidodrome, pinnate  
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous  
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: yellow  
Fall characteristic: not showy

**Flower**

Flower color: white/cream/gray  
Flower characteristics: showy

**Fruit**

Fruit shape: oval  
Fruit length: less than .5 inch  
Fruit covering: dry or hard  
Fruit color: brown  
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

**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  
Current year twig thickness: thin, medium  
Wood specific gravity: unknown

**Culture**

Light requirement: full sun  
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained  
Drought tolerance: moderate  
Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

**Other**

Roots: not a problem  
Winter interest: yes  
Outstanding tree: yes  
Ozone sensitivity: unknown  
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

**Use and Management**

The wide-spreading, upright-spreading branches help to make this a fabulous small shade tree, casting deep shade beneath the tree. Some early pruning may be necessary to remove the lower branches (to allow easier access below the tree) or to control the tree's shape. Seek out this little-known tree for a specimen or group planting which is not likely to be duplicated in the near future due to the rarity of the tree.

Fragrant Epaulette Tree should be grown in full sun on moist, well-drained soil. It will tolerate both acid and alkaline soils. The trees perform best when they receive no shade, becoming thin and flowering poorly in the shade.

Propagation is by seed.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.