

Osmanthus americanus: Devilwood¹

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Introduction

A native to the southeastern United States, Devilwood is a very attractive, small evergreen tree which is most commonly seen at 15 to 25 feet in height and sports lush, dark, olive green leaves throughout the year. It is occasionally seen 30 to 40 feet tall in its native habitat and grows slowly. The clusters of small, white, fragrant, early springtime flowers are followed by the production of small, dark blue drupes, ripening in fall and persisting on the tree until the following spring, if not first consumed by birds and other wildlife. Its ease of growth, pest-resistance, attractive foliage and flowers, and wildlife-attracting fruits would make Devilwood a popular choice for naturalizing or the mixed shrubby border. The trees tolerate heavy pruning particularly well and may also be used as a hedge. Devilwood is

so-named because the fine-textured wood is difficult to split and hard to work.

General Information

Scientific name: *Osmanthus americanus*

Pronunciation: oz-MANTH-us uh-mair-ih-KAY-nus

Common name(s): Devilwood, Wild-Olive

Family: *Oleaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 9B (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: hedge; screen; reclamation; deck or patio; highway median; street without sidewalk; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; specimen

Availability: not native to North America



Figure 1. Young *Osmanthus americanus*: Devilwood
Credits: Ed Gilman



Figure 2. Range

1. This document is ENH-583, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Description

Height: 15 to 25 feet
Spread: 10 to 15 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical
Crown shape: vase, round
Crown density: dense
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: lanceolate, ovate, elliptic (oval)
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

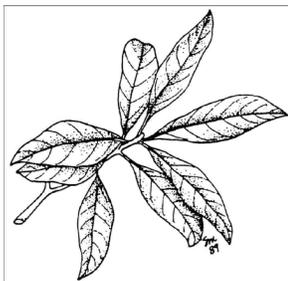


Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

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

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: blue
Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
Pruning requirement: little required
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: green, brown
Current year twig thickness: thick
Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; extended flooding; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: high

Other

Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: no
Outstanding tree: yes
Ozone sensitivity: unknown
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown
Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

Naturally found along streambanks or swamp margins, Devilwood should be grown in full sun or partial shade on moist, well-drained soil. Drought tolerance is moderate once established. The tree is probably as shade tolerant as any osmanthus. Not tested as an urban tree but may have some merit in wet soils.

Propagation is by cuttings or seed, and is difficult by either.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.