

***Grevillea robusta*: Silk-Oak¹**

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Introduction

Reaching a height of 75 feet or more with a 30-foot spread, silk-oak is pyramidal to oval in shape, eventually developing a few heavy horizontal limbs and a thick trunk. The light, ferny, green leaves, silvery-white beneath, are accented by large clusters of yellow orange flowers in spring. A great quantity of leaves fall in the spring immediately preceding the emergence of new growth, and leaves also fall sporadically throughout the year, creating quite a litter problem to some people. Silver gray to brown, leathery seed capsules follow the flowers.

General Information

Scientific name: *Grevillea robusta*

Pronunciation: grev-ILL-ee-uh roe-BUS-tuh

Common name(s): Silk-oak

Family: *Proteaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Figure 2)

Origin: native to coastal eastern Australia

UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status: not considered a problem species at this time, may be recommended (North, Central, South)

Uses: specimen



Figure 1. Full Form—*Grevillea robusta*: Silk-oak

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Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 40 to 75 feet

Spread: 25 to 30 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: pyramidal, oval

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: odd-pinnately compound; made up of 7-19 leaflets

Leaf margin: parted, revolute

Leaf shape: lanceolate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 6 to 13 inches; leaflets are 1 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green on top, silvery white underneath

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow orange

Flower characteristics: showy; emerges on one side of a raceme

Flowering: spring

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: ½–¾ inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: silvery gray to brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem



Figure 3. Leaf—*Grevillea robusta*: Silk-oak



Figure 4. Flower—*Grevillea robusta*: Silk-oak

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/branches: branches don't droop; showy; typically one trunk; no thorns

Bark: gray to light brown, becoming furrowed in an interlacing pattern with age

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: susceptible to breakage

Current year twig color: brown, gray

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown



Figure 5. Fruit—*Grevillea robusta*: Silk-oak



Figure 6. Bark—*Grevillea robusta*: Silk-oak
Credits: Gitta Hasing

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: low

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Silk-oak works as a specimen in large, open landscapes but probably should not be located near houses due to their large size, messy habit, and the brittleness of the wood as it ages. Tops of trees are known to snap out of the tree in high winds. It is a valuable timber tree in its native Australia, growing to more than 125 feet tall.

Quick-growing silk-oak requires full sun and sandy, well-drained soils to perform its best, developing mushroom root rot in poorly drained, wet soils. Silk-oak thrives in heat and is quite tolerant of drought. It grows extremely well in southern California where it easily reaches 100 feet tall. Tall trees are often hit by lightning in Florida.

Propagation is by seed. For best results, extract seed from mature, unopened follicles and plant immediately.

Pests

Caterpillars.

Diseases

Mushroom root rot on poorly-drained soils.

Reference

Koeser, A.K., Friedman, M.H., Hasing, G., Finley, H., Schelb, J. 2017. Trees: South Florida and the Keys. Gainesville: University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.