

# *Pterostyrax hispida*: Fragrant Epaulette Tree<sup>1</sup>

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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



Figure 1. Young *Pterostyrax hispida*: Fragrant epaulette tree.

Credits: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

**Family:** *Styracaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 4B through 8A (Figure 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** not assessed/incomplete assessment

**Uses:** deck or patio; specimen; shade

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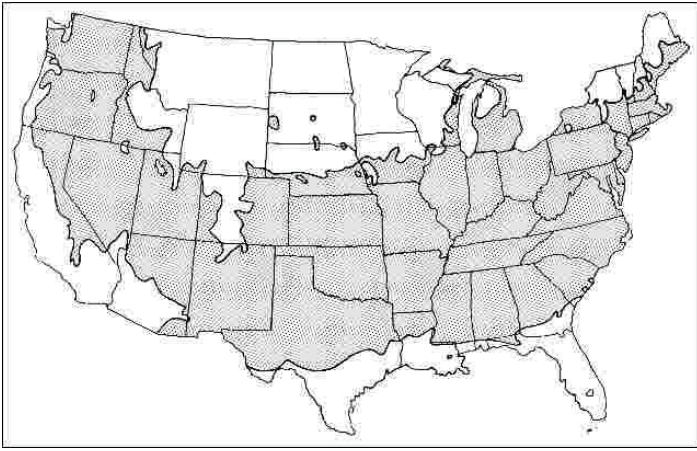


Figure 2. Range.  
Credits: UF/IFAS

## 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

**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 0.5 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.