



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Breynia disticha¹

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Introduction

Snowbush is a rounded shrub that is used primarily for its attractive foliage (Fig. 1). This 5- to 8-foot-tall, vase-shaped to rounded plant has variegated leaves with white, green and red coloration. Plants appear to differ in foliage coloration with some showing almost whitish new growth and others with a white and green variegation. The simple leaves are somewhat two-ranked and could appear to be pinnately compound at first glance. The red branches of this shrub are slender, wiry and appear to zig-zag. Snowbush has green, petal-less flowers that occur in axillary clusters on long peduncles; the flowers are mostly inconspicuous due to the striking foliage. The fruits are red berries that are 3/8 inch wide.

General Information

Scientific name: *Breynia disticha*

Pronunciation: BRAY-nee-uh DISS-stick-uh

Common name(s): Snowbush

Family: *Euphorbiaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: specimen; superior hedge; suitable for growing indoors; border; foundation; mass planting; cascading down a wall

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

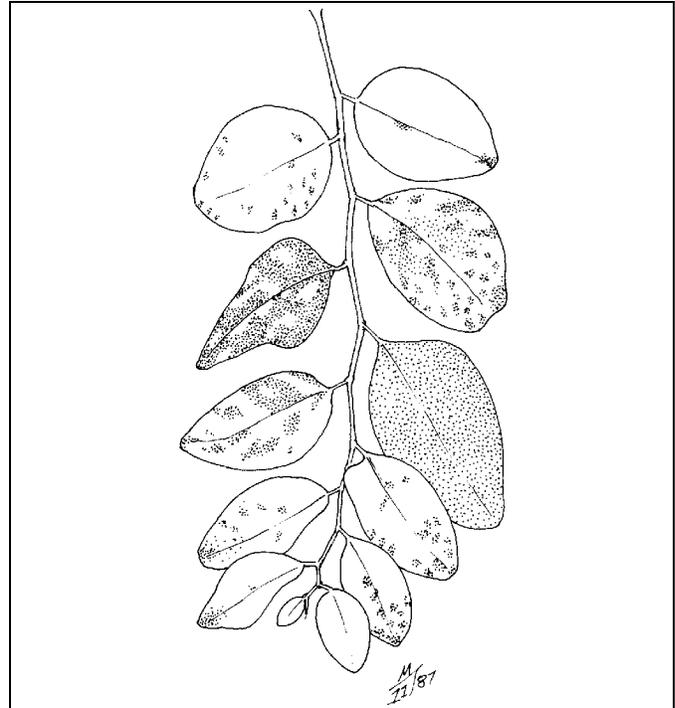


Figure 1. Snowbush.

Height: 5 to 8 feet

Spread: 4 to 7 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Description

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: ovate; obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: purple or red; variegated; pink

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy

Current year stem/twig color: reddish

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam;

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

This shrub may be used as a specimen and accent, and it also forms a nice hedge. Given enough room to expand its canopy, a single, unpruned specimen forms an attractive vase shape. It can also make for an accent in a shrub border. Branches are flexible enough to drape over a wall.

Snowbush will grow well on a wide range of soils but requires a full sun position in the landscape to maintain dense growth. This plant is tolerant of light, sandy soils but will not tolerate salt. Vigorous growth with regular, light fertilizer applications allows the new foliage to show its true charm.

Snowbush may be propagated by cuttings and sucker divisions.

Pests and Diseases

Although caterpillars and mites may be troublesome pests for Snowbush, this plant is not susceptible to any major diseases.