



## *Cotinus coggygria* Smoketree<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

This slow growing, open-crowned, round, small tree eventually reaches to 10 to 15 feet tall (occasionally 20) and 10 to 15 feet wide (Fig. 1). The large panicles of wispy cream-colored flowers produced in spring and early summer give the effect of a cloud of smoke. They make a wonderful accent in a shrub border and can be planted as a specimen or as a patio tree where the black, showy, multiple trunk can be displayed. Planting Smoketree is a good way to extend the spring flowering-tree season into the summer before the Crape-Myrtles come into full bloom. Fall color is usually good to excellent and ranges from yellow to orange and brilliant red-purple. Many people grow it simply to enjoy the vivid fall color.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Cotinus coggygria*

**Pronunciation:** koe-TYE-nus koe-GUY-gree-uh

**Common name(s):** Smoketree, Wig-Tree, Smokebush

**Family:** *Anacardiaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5B through 8 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; reclamation plant; screen; trainable as a standard; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns

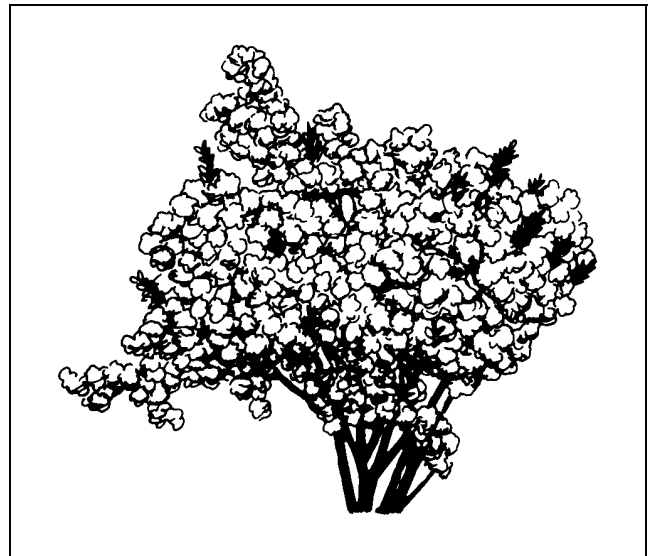


Figure 1. Middle-aged Smoketree.

(3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 10 to 15 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 18 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** round

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); obovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate; reticulate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** blue or blue-green; green

**Fall color:** orange; purple; red; yellow

**Fall characteristic:** showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** pink; white

**Flower characteristics:** spring flowering; summer flowering; very showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** irregular; oval

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; showy

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; showy trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown

**Current year twig thickness:** medium; thick

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun

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

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerance:** moderate

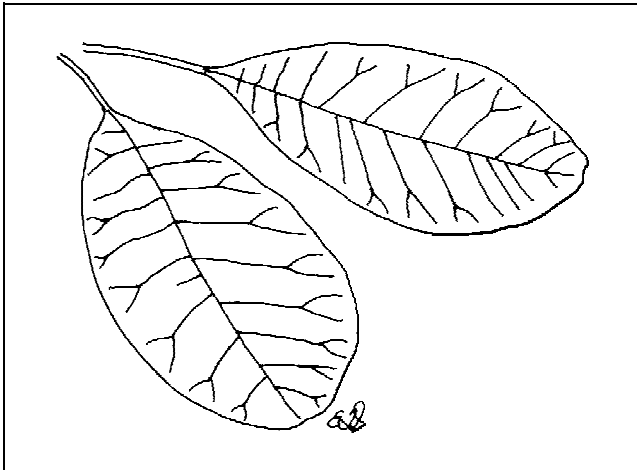


Figure 3. Foliage of Smoketree.

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

The tree is tough and adapts to restricted soil spaces. It could be used along a street under power lines and would not require pruning for many years. It is a small tree, well-adapted to urban areas with almost year-round interest which should be used more in our landscapes.

Smoketree grows best in a sunny location and a well-drained loam. It will grow asymmetrically and lean toward the light in a partially sunny area, so it is best to locate it in full day sun where the crown will develop symmetrically. Though sometimes short-lived in rich soil, Smoketree is useful in dry, rocky soil where there is no irrigation. It also grows in a wide range of soil pH, including alkaline. It is probably short-lived (20 years - maybe more) in most situations but who cares - the tree is great while it's around!

Propagation is by seed but there is considerable variation in leaf color. Cutting propagation can be accomplished in June or early July with IBA.

Cultivars include: 'Daydream' - heavy production of panicles, dense habit of growth; 'Flame' - brilliant orange-red fall color, pink inflorescences; 'Nordine' -

resembles 'Royal Purple'; 'Notcutt's Variety' - dark maroon-purple leaves (also known as 'Foliis Purpureis Notcutt's Variety' and 'Rubrifolius'); 'Purpureus' - leaves bronze-green, inflorescences purplish-pink; 'Royal Purple' - leaves are darker purple than 'Notcutt's Variety', rich red-purple fall color, purplish-red inflorescences; 'Pendulus' - pendulous branches; and 'Velvet Cloak' - dark purple-leaf form, spectacular fall color of reddish-purple.

### Pests

Oblique-banded leaf roller mines and rolls the leaves, usually in June. The insect rarely occurs in sufficient numbers to warrant control. When it does occur they can be picked off by hand or sprayed with *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

### Diseases

Leaf spots can be caused by various genera of fungi but are usually not serious.

Scab may cause leaf drop. No controls are listed.

The most serious disease is Verticillium wilt. Smoketree is very susceptible, and entire branches wilt and die. Prune out infected branches, fertilize, and water the plant during dry weather.

A stem canker can be a problem in the eastern U.S.