



Cotinus coggygria 'Velvet Cloak' 'Velvet Cloak' Smoketree¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

This slow growing, open-crown, round, small tree eventually reaches to 10 to 15 feet tall (occasionally 20) and 12 to 15 feet wide (Fig. 1). The large panicles of wispy purple-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. This cultivar has deep red-purple foliage which does not turn green in the summer. Fall color is usually a spectacular red-purple. Many people grow it simply to enjoy the vivid fall color.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Cotinus coggygria* 'Velvet Cloak'

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

Common name(s): 'Velvet Cloak' Smoketree, 'Velvet Cloak' Wig-Tree, 'Velvet Cloak' 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

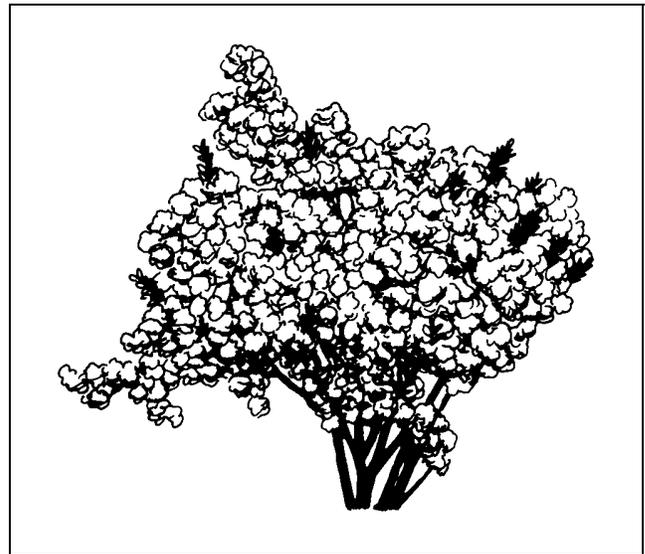


Figure 1. Middle-aged 'Velvet Cloak' Smoketree.

islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree

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

DESCRIPTION

Height: 10 to 15 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 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: purple or red

Fall color: purple; red

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: purple; 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

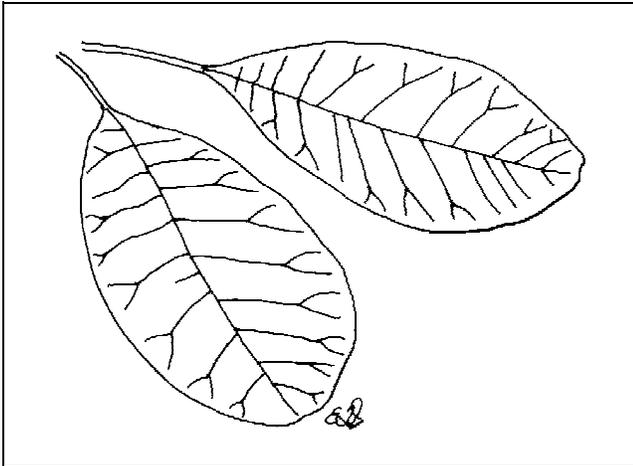


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Velvet Cloak' Smoketree.

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. Probably short-lived (20 years - maybe more) in most situations but who cares - the tree is great while it's around!

Propagation of cultivars is by cuttings.

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.

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.