

## *Zelkova serrata* 'Village Green' 'Village Green' Japanese Zelkova<sup>1</sup>

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

### INTRODUCTION

'Village Green' somewhat resembles the vase shape of American Elms, is tolerant of pollution, makes a great city street tree and produces a shorter and wider tree than 'Green Vase' Zelkova (Fig. 1). 'Village Green' is reportedly more cold tolerant than 'Green Vase'. Zelkova is often listed as a replacement for American Elm since it has roughly the same vase shape and grows 50 to 60 feet tall with a 50 to 60-foot spread. But no tree will truly match the grace and elegance of the American Elm. Zelkova is massive, with the trunk capable of growing to four feet or more in diameter. It has a moderate growth rate and likes a sunny exposure. Branches are more numerous and smaller in diameter than American Elm. Major branches grow very upright and provide easy clearance for tall vehicles below making it quite suitable as a street tree. Leaves are 1.5 to 4 inches long, turning a brilliant rusty red or bronze in the fall.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Zelkova serrata* 'Village Green'

**Pronunciation:** zell-KOE-vuh sair-AY-tuh

**Common name(s):** 'Village Green' Japanese Zelkova, 'Village Green' Saw-Leaf Zelkova

**Family:** *Ulmaceae*

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** 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

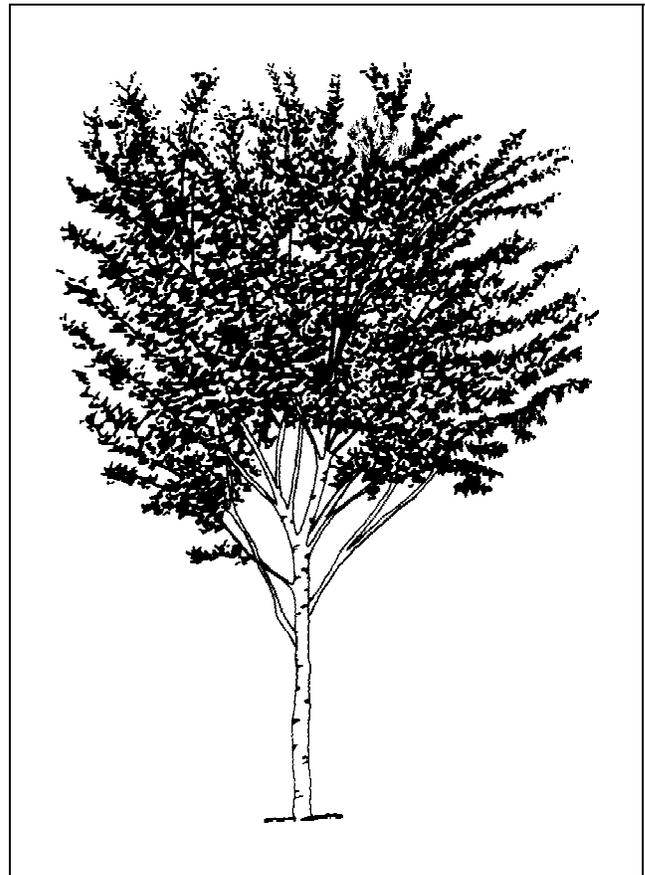


Figure 1. Young 'Village Green' Japanese Zelkova.

for median strip plantings in the highway; shade tree; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

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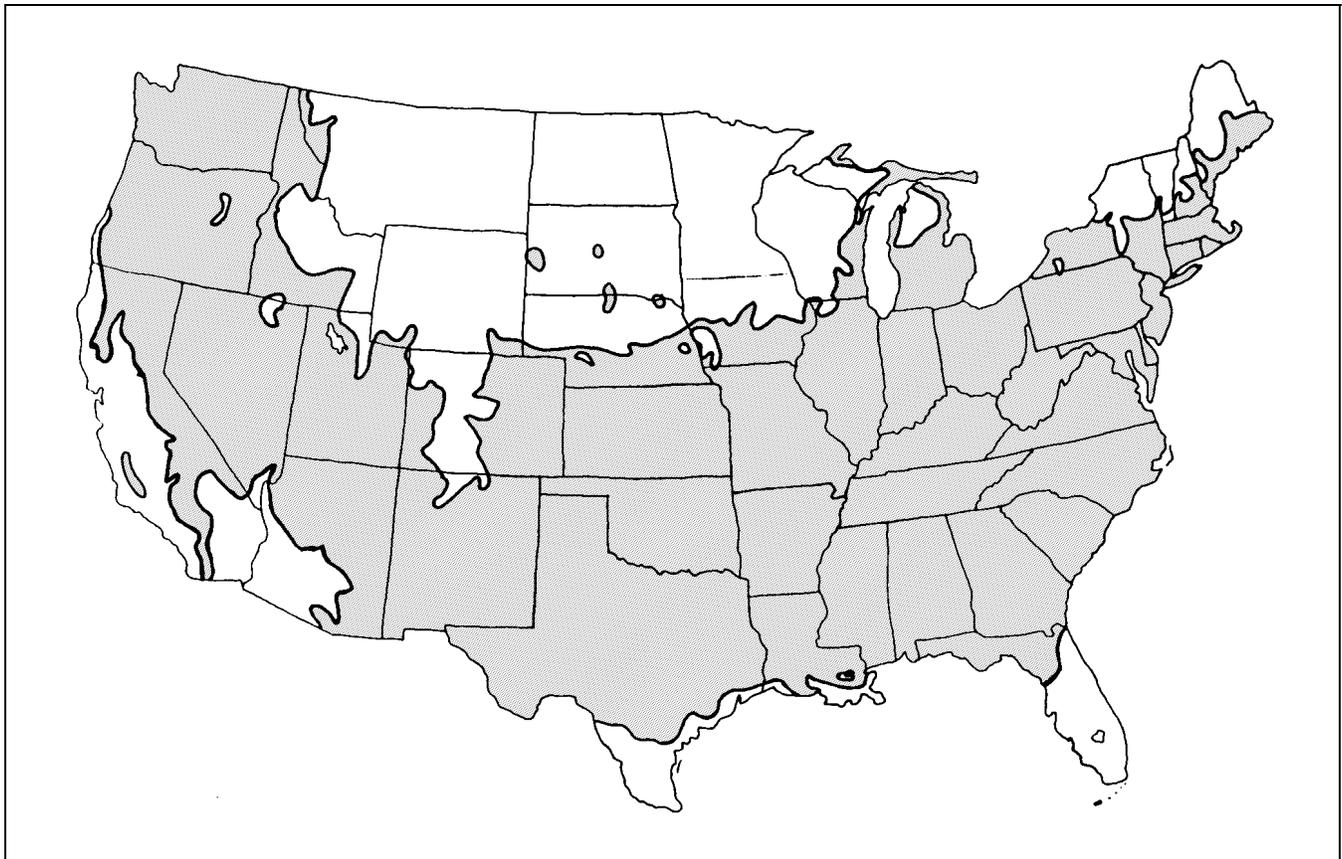


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

**Fall characteristic:** showy

**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 50 to 60 feet

**Spread:** 45 to 50 feet

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

**Crown shape:** vase shape

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** fine

**Flower**

**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** oval

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

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

**Foliage**

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

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** serrate

**Leaf shape:** oblong; ovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** copper; red

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break

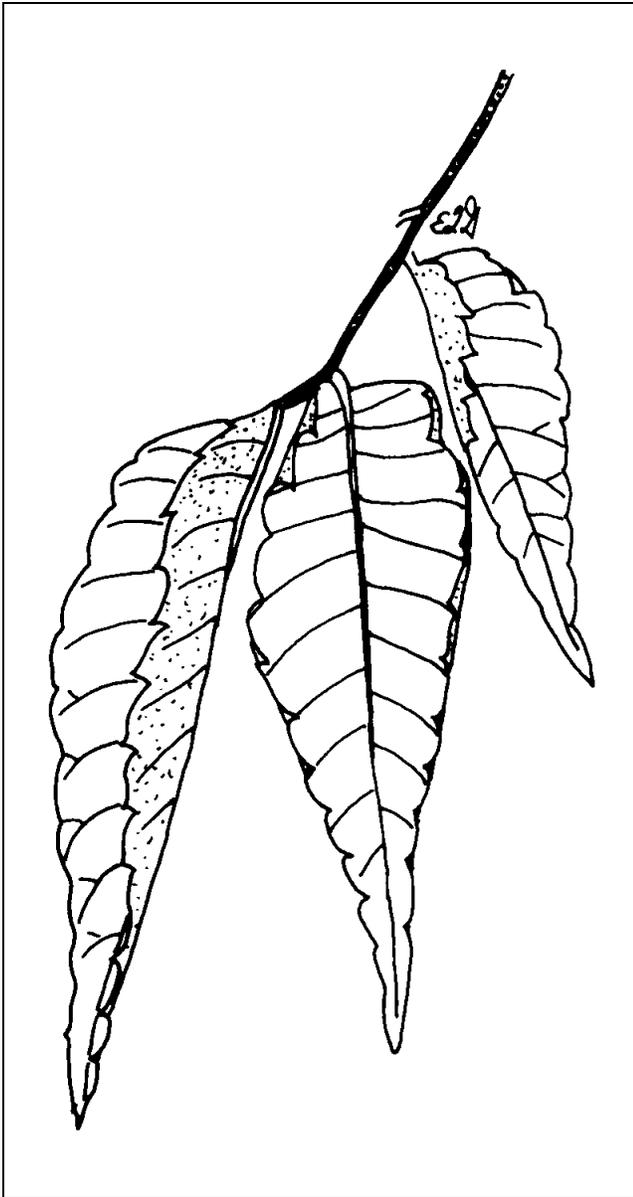


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Village Green' Japanese Zelkova.

**Current year twig color:** brown  
**Current year twig thickness:** thin

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

### 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:** not known to be susceptible  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

Unfortunately, the branches on Zelkova are often clumped together on the trunk at one point. Double and multiple trunks or leaders with embedded bark are also common. This is not a desirable form for planting in urban areas and needs to be prevented, or corrected, on existing trees. Purchase trees with branches spaced along the trunk so they can develop a secure hold onto the trunk. These will be hard to find but insist on it! Be sure that branches remain less than about half the diameter of the trunk to maintain a strong, durable form. Encourage nurserymen to grow trees with good trunk and branch structure.

The tree will tolerate most soil types, including those with a pH to about 7.5, but prefers a moist deep loam. It is reportedly risky to transplant in the fall. Established trees are fairly drought-tolerant, requiring little irrigation unless located in sandy soil. It makes a wonderful street tree even in restricted-soil tree pits, and is almost pest free. The crowns will eventually grow together if trees are planted on 30-foot-centers, forming a wonderful shaded street. This is a tough, urban tree which is often planted along streets in downtown and residential areas.

Cultivars include: 'Village Green' also resembles the shape of the American Elm and is more winter hardy than 'Green Vase', and may have a straighter trunk.

### Diseases

Normally disease-free as it resists Dutch Elm disease, Elm leaf beetle and Japanese beetles.

Zelkova is subject to canker diseases particularly if the trunk is repeatedly wounded. Avoid wounding and maintain tree health.