**Aesculus pavia**

Edward F. Gilman

### Introduction

Red Buckeye is a small North American native tree, capable of reaching 25 to 30 feet tall in the wild though is most often at 15 to 20 feet high when grown in cultivation (Fig. 1). Red Buckeye is most popular for its springtime display of three to six-inch-long, upright, terminal panicles composed of 1.5-inch-wide, red flowers which are quite attractive to hummingbirds. These blooms are followed by flat, round capsules which contain bitter and poisonous seeds. The large, dark green, palmate leaves usually offer no great color change in fall and often drop as early as late September.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Aesculus pavia*

**Pronunciation:** ESS-kew-lus PAY-vee-uh

**Common name(s):** Red Buckeye

**Family:** Hippocastanaceae

**Plant type:** tree

**USDA hardiness zones:** 6 through 9A (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 7:** year round

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); residential street tree; near a deck or patio; specimen; container or above-ground planter; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; shade

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

### Description

**Height:** 15 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 25 feet

**Plant habit:** pyramidal; irregular outline or silhouette

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** coarse

---

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-17, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1999. Please visit the EDIS web site at [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu).

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.
Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: palmately compound
Leaf margin: double serrate
Leaf shape: obovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red
Flower characteristic: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches
Fruit cover: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristic: showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; no thorns
Current year stem/twig color: brown
Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: acidic; well-drained; sand; loam; extended flooding
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: not applicable
Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

The coarse, open structure and the light brown, flaky bark is quite attractive and offers great winter landscape interest. Branches arise from the typically straight trunk at a wide angle forming a durable structure. There are many, small-diameter branches with an occasional upright, aggressive one growing as large as the trunk. Main branches begin forming low on the trunk and remain there when grown in the full sun.

The tree is best used as a novelty patio tree or as part of a shrubbery border to add bright red color for several weeks in the spring and coarse texture during the rest of the year. Plant it in a medium- to large-sized residential landscape as a very coarse accent. Extremely coarse in winter without leaves, Red Buckeye will attract attention with the bright brown or tan bark reflecting the rays of the sun. Lower branches can be removed to allow for clearance beneath the crown, but the tree looks its best planted in the open to allow branches to fully develop to the ground.

Red Buckeye will flower well in rather dense shade but takes on its best form when grown in full sun with some afternoon shade on moist, well-drained soil. It is native along moist stream banks and is not very drought-tolerant.

The cultivar ‘Atrosanguinea’ has deeper red flowers; ‘Humilis’ is a low or prostrate shrub with small panicles of red flowers. Hybrids between Aesculus pavia x Aesculus sylvatica have been seen, bearing red and yellow flowers.

Red Buckeye is easily grown from seed, with plants flowering after three years.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.