



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Aesculus pavia*¹

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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



Figure 1. Red Buckeye.

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

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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.

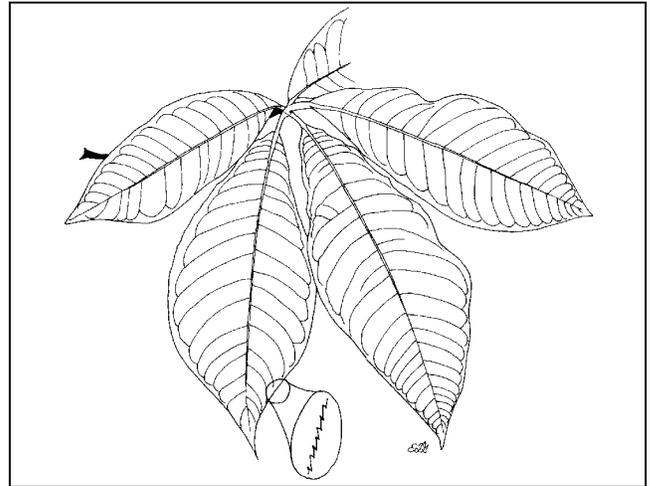


Figure 3. Foliage of Red Buckeye