Cephalotaxus harringtonia

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

Looking like a dwarf form of the Common Podocarpus, the Plum-Yew is a useful shrub for the same purpose as boxwood - a slow-growing, low, formal, evergreen clipped hedge or border (Fig. 1). It can be kept at a height as low as 12 inches. The dark green foliage contrasts well with many other landscape plants.

General Information

Scientific name: Cephalotaxus harringtonia
Pronunciation: seff-uh-loe-TACKS-sus hair-ring-TOE-nee-uh
Common name(s): Japanese Plum-Yew
Family: Cephalotaxaceae
Plant type: shrub
USDA hardiness zones: 6 through 9 (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: hedge; container or above-ground planter; specimen; border
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Description

Height: 5 to 10 feet
Spread: 5 to 10 feet
Plant habit: upright
Plant density: dense

Figure 1. Japanese Plum-Yew.

Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf shape: needle-like (filiform)
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests
Use and Management

For best appearance, Japanese Plum-Yew requires fertile soil with good moisture-holding capacity. It thrives in sun or shade and is very versatile. Few nurseries offer this plant.

The cultivar ‘Fastigiata’ has a narrow and erect form.

Propagation is by softwood cuttings in spring.

Soil nematodes can be a problem.

Pests and Diseases

Plants are susceptible to mushroom root rot.