



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Euonymus japonica*¹

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Introduction

Spindle-Tree is a loose, spreading shrub that can grow to 15 feet in height, but is most commonly seen about 6- to 8-feet-tall (Fig. 1). The most outstanding feature of this large shrub is its red-orange fruit borne in the fall. The showy fruits are scarlet capsules that crack open in the fall to display their scarlet seeds, and a plant in heavy fruit is lovely. The dark green, deciduous foliage changes to a showy, bright red color in the fall. This plant has 1\2-inch-wide, greenish-white, inconspicuous flowers that occur from May until June.

General Information

Scientific name: *Euonymus japonica*

Pronunciation: yoo-AW-nim-us juh-PAW-nick-uh

Common name(s): Japanese Euonymus, Spindle-Tree

Family: *Celastraceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 7B through 10A (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: border; mass planting; screen; container or above-ground planter; near a deck or patio; espalier

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

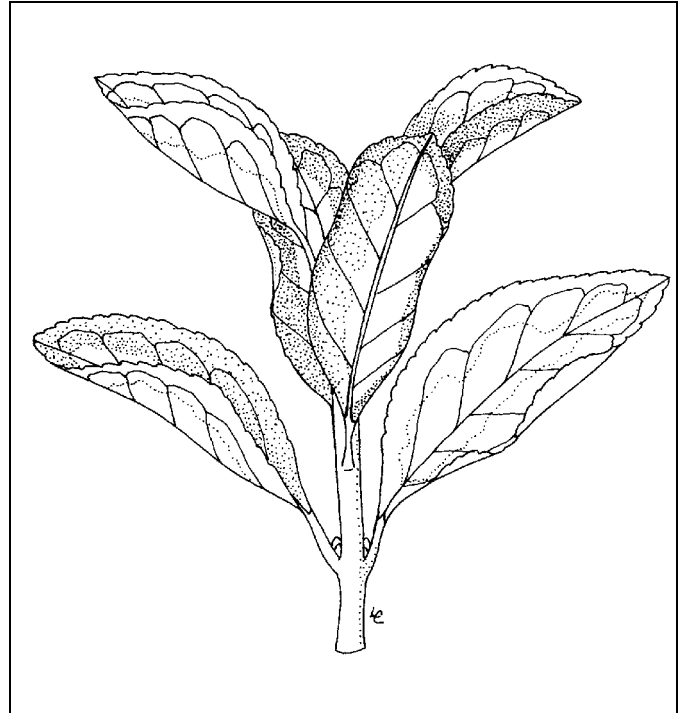


Figure 1. Japanese Euonymus.

Description

Height: 6 to 15 feet

Spread: 3 to 5 feet

Plant habit: upright; oval

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** serrate
- Leaf shape:** ovate
- Leaf venation:** pinnate
- Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous; semi-evergreen
- Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches
- Leaf color:** variegated
- Fall color:** orange
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

Flower

- Flower color:** greenish-white
- Flower characteristic:** spring flowering

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** oval
- Fruit length:** less than .5 inch
- Fruit cover:** dry or hard
- Fruit color:** red
- Fruit characteristic:** persists on the plant; attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
- Current year stem/twig color:** green
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** very thick

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:** moderate
- 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: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

The Spindle-Tree is excellent for naturalizing and gives a stunning effect when massed or planted in a row. It can be used as a specimen or foundation plant (if it is regularly clipped) and creates a nice border or hedge.

Spindle-Tree will tolerate different types of well-drained soils but does not tolerate drought well; water and mulch the ground beneath the canopy for best growth. It grows in sun or shade, putting on the best fall color in full sun. Some shade from the afternoon sun in the southern part of its range is beneficial. The plant will withstand heavy pruning and has been used as a hedge for many years. Spindle-Tree transplants well when balled and burlapped or from containers.

The seeds should be cold stratified for 1 to 3 months, and cuttings can be taken anytime the plant is in leaf.

Pests and Diseases

Extreme susceptibility to *Euonymus* scale and crown gall makes this a high maintenance plant in some landscapes. Both of these problems are of considerable importance, therefore some feel this plant is not garden worthy.