



# *Aesculus x carnea* Red Horsechestnut<sup>1</sup>

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

## INTRODUCTION

This hybrid of *Aesculus hippocastanum* and *Aesculus pavia* has very large, dark green leaves composed of five to seven leaflets, and will ultimately reach a height and spread of 30 to 40 feet (Fig. 1). Although deciduous, Red Horsechestnut does not produce any appreciable fall color and is well-suited for use as a specimen. The tree is quite striking with dark green, coarse-textured foliage. Pyramidal in shape when very young, Red Horsechestnut develops slowly into a round, very dense shade tree by five to seven years of age, and is outstanding in the landscape for its beautiful springtime display of blossoms. The multitude of pink to bright scarlet blooms appear on erect, eight-inch-long panicles at each branch tip and are quite attractive to bees and hummingbirds. The prickly, rather messy, poisonous seedpods appear in fall.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Aesculus x carnea*

**Pronunciation:** ESS-kew-lus x KAR-nee-uh

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

**Family:** *Hippocastanaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5 through 7 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; 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 for median strip plantings in the highway; screen; shade tree; narrow tree lawns

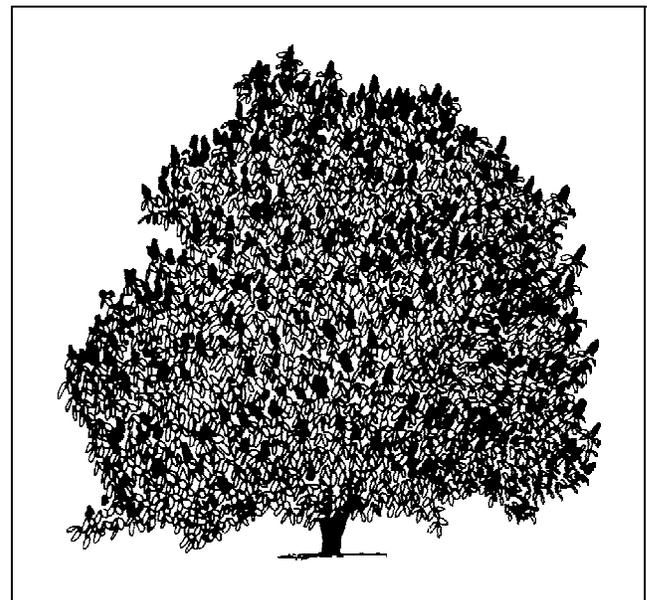


Figure 1. Middle-aged Red Horsechestnut.

(3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree

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

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 30 to 45 feet

**Spread:** 30 to 45 feet

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

**Crown shape:** round; pyramidal

**Crown density:** dense

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-65, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.

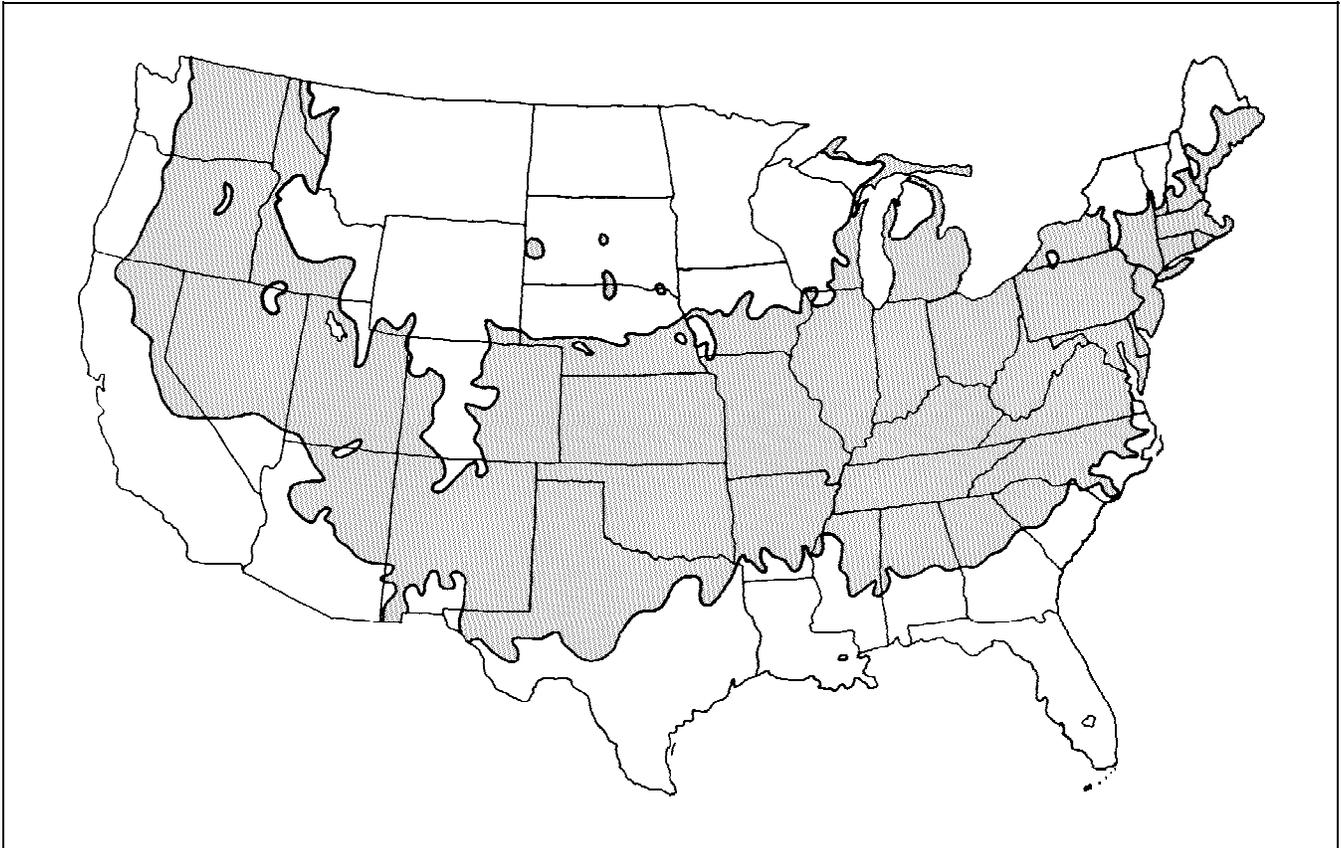


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** coarse

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** palmately compound

**Leaflet margin:** serrate

**Leaflet shape:** oblanceolate

**Leaflet venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaflet blade length:** 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** pink; red

**Flower characteristics:** spring flowering; very showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval; round

**Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts squirrels and other mammals; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

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

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown

**Current year twig thickness:** thick

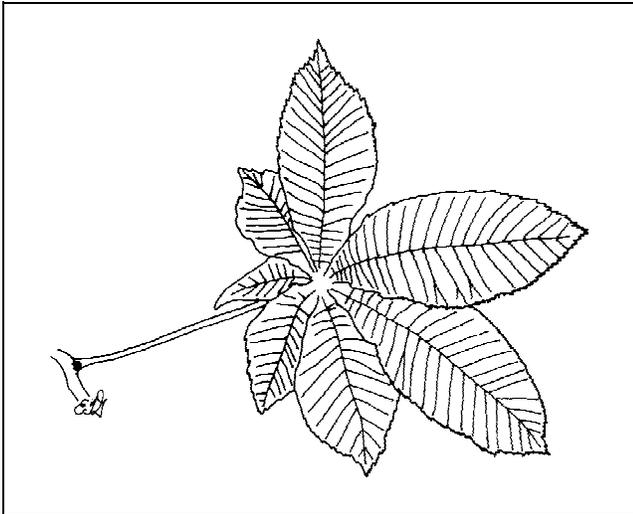


Figure 3. Foliage of Red Horsechestnut.

## Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

**Soil 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

Leaf and flower litter in the summer and fall may be objectionable to some people since the leaves are large and decompose slowly. The nuts make good food for wildlife but you may not want it scattered along city streets. They can make great ammunition for throwing at moving objects, windows and other people so locate it accordingly. Makes a great median street tree when provided with some irrigation during drought.

Red Horsechestnut will grow in full sun or light shade and prefers moist, well-drained, acid soils but grows in slightly alkaline soil. Plants are moderately

tolerant to drought, wind, and salt and resist the heat of the south very well. It holds up well in urban areas, even in restricted and compacted soil spaces. Red Horsechestnut appears to be less susceptible to disease than either of the parents. Trunk bark may crack when exposed to the direct sun so keep it shaded as much as possible by leaving lower branches on small trees and don't over-prune the tree, exposing the trunk suddenly to direct sun.

The cultivar 'Briotii' has deep scarlet flowers in 10-inch-long panicles and no fruit; 'Rosea' has pink flowers. 'O'Neil's Red' has double red flowers.

Propagation is from seed, an oddity for most hybrids.

## Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Much less susceptible to leaf scorch and leaf blotch than *Aesculus hippocastanum*, and should be planted in its place.