

Celtis occidentalis 'Prairie Pride' 'Prairie Pride' Common Hackberry¹

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INTRODUCTION

The tree forms a rounded vase reaching a height of 40 to 50 feet, is a moderately-rapid grower (Fig. 1). The mature bark is light gray, rough and corky and the small fruit turns from orange red to purple and is relished by birds. The fruit temporarily stains walks but this cultivar fruits far less than the species. Leaves are wider than *Celtis laevigata* and more serrated. Hackberry may recover from transplanting from a field nursery slowly due to the extensive, coarsely branched root system, but this can be overcome by planting from containers.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Celtis occidentalis* 'Prairie Pride'

Pronunciation: SELL-tiss ock-sih-den-TAY-liss

Common name(s): 'Prairie Pride' Common Hackberry

Family: *Ulmaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 3B through 9A (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; reclamation plant; shade tree; residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

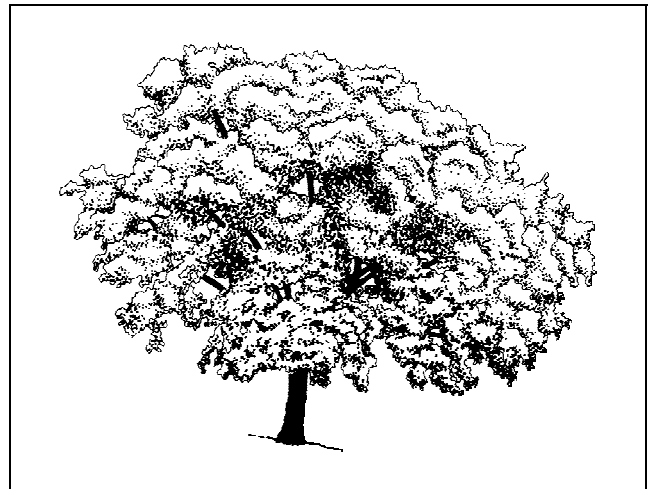


Figure 1. Mature 'Prairie Pride' Common Hackberry.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 40 to 55 feet

Spread: 40 to 50 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: oval; round

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)

Leaf venation: bowed; pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf color: green
Fall color: yellow
Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: green
Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: < .5 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: black; purple; red
Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown; green

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: 0.53

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; extended flooding; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: good

Other

Roots: surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: seeds itself into the landscape

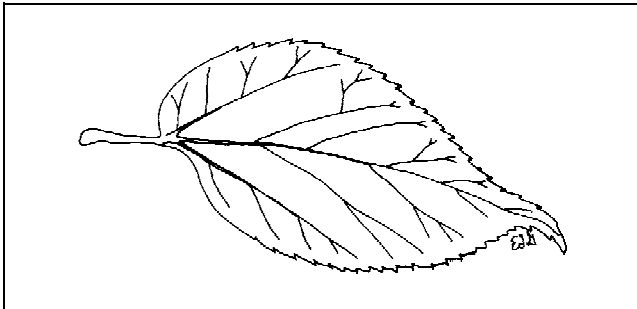


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Prairie Pride' Common Hackberry.

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Hackberry grows naturally in moist bottomland soil but will grow rapidly in a variety of soil types from moist, fertile soils to hot, dry, rocky locations in the full sun. Hackberry is tolerant of highly alkaline soil whereas Sugarberry is not. It is wind, drought, salt and pollution tolerant once established and is considered a moderately tough, urban-tolerant tree. Skilled pruning is required for the species several times during the first 15 years of life to prevent formation of weak branch crotches and weak multiple trunks. However, this cultivar reportedly forms a central trunk better than other Hackberries and unlike the species, many branches originate from the trunk. This should make it easier to train into a strong, well-formed urban tree.

The species was extensively used in street plantings in parts of Texas and in other cities as it tolerates most soils except extremely alkaline (pH > 8), and grows in sun or partial shade but branches may break out from the trunk if proper pruning and training is not conducted early in the life of the tree. Further testing is needed to determine if this cultivar resists breakage better than the species. Even slight injury to the trunk and branches can initiate decay inside the tree. If you use this tree, locate it where it will be protected from mechanical injury. If used along streets where the trunk would be injured, internal root may develop.

Prune and thin the canopy to prevent formation of weak, multi-trunk trees. The tree is susceptible to breakage in ice storms.

Pests

The most common insect on Hackberry causes the Hackberry nipple gall. A pouch or gall forms on the lower leaf surface in response to feeding. There are sprays available if you care to reduce this cosmetic problem.

Scales of various types may be found on Hackberry. These may be controlled with horticultural oil sprays.

Diseases

Many native and planted trees died slowly from an unknown cause.

Several fungi cause leaf spots on Hackberry. The disease is worse during wet weather but chemical controls are seldom needed.

This cultivar is mostly resistant to witches broom. Witches broom is caused by a mite and powdery mildew. The main symptom is clusters of twigs scattered throughout the tree crown. Prune out the clusters of twigs when practical. Most common on *Celtis occidentalis*.

Powdery mildew may coat the leaves with white powder. The leaves may be uniformly coated or only in patches.

Mistletoe is an effective colonizer of Sugarberry, which can kill a tree over a period of time. It appears as evergreen masses several feet in diameter scattered about the crown.