Ginkgo biloba
Maidenhair Tree[1]

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson[2]

INTRODUCTION

Ginkgo is practically pest-free, resistant to storm damage, and casts light to moderate shade (Fig. 1). Young trees are often very open but they fill in to form a denser canopy. It makes a durable street tree where there is enough overhead space to accommodate the large size. The shape is often irregular with a large branch or two seemingly forming its own tree on the trunk. But this does not detract from its usefulness as a city tree unless the tree will be growing in a restricted overhead space. If this is the case, select from the narrow upright cultivars such as 'Princeton Sentry' and 'Fairmont'. Ginkgo tolerates most soil, including compacted, and alkaline, and grows slowly to 75 feet or more tall. The tree is easily transplanted and has a vivid yellow fall color which is second to none in brilliance, even in the south. However, leaves fall quickly and the fall color show is short.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Ginkgo biloba*
Pronunciation: GINK-go bye-LOE-buh
Common name(s): Maidenhair Tree, Ginkgo
Family: *Ginkgoaceae*
USDA hardiness zones: 3 through 8A (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: Bonsai; wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or
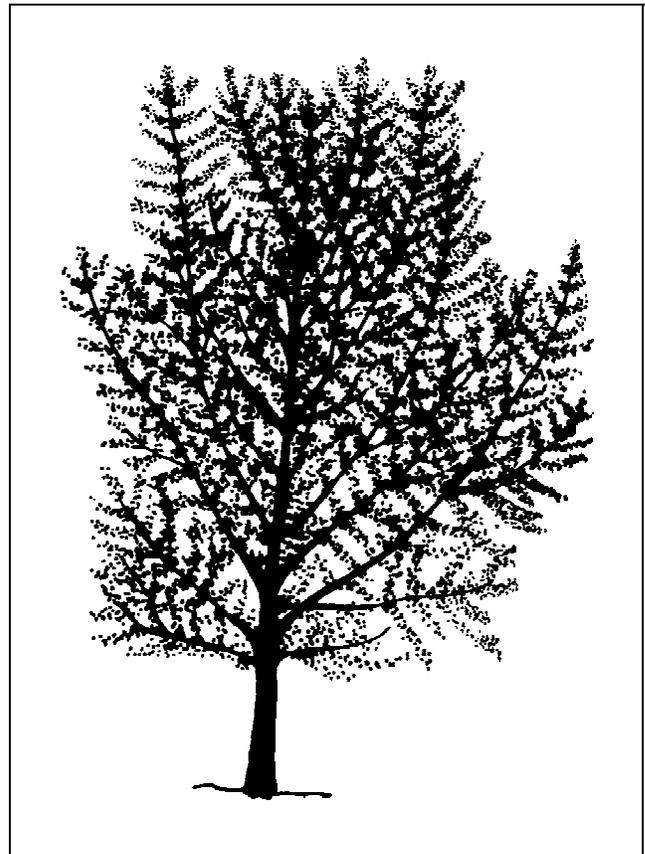

Figure 1. Middle-aged Maidenhair Tree.

drought are common
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

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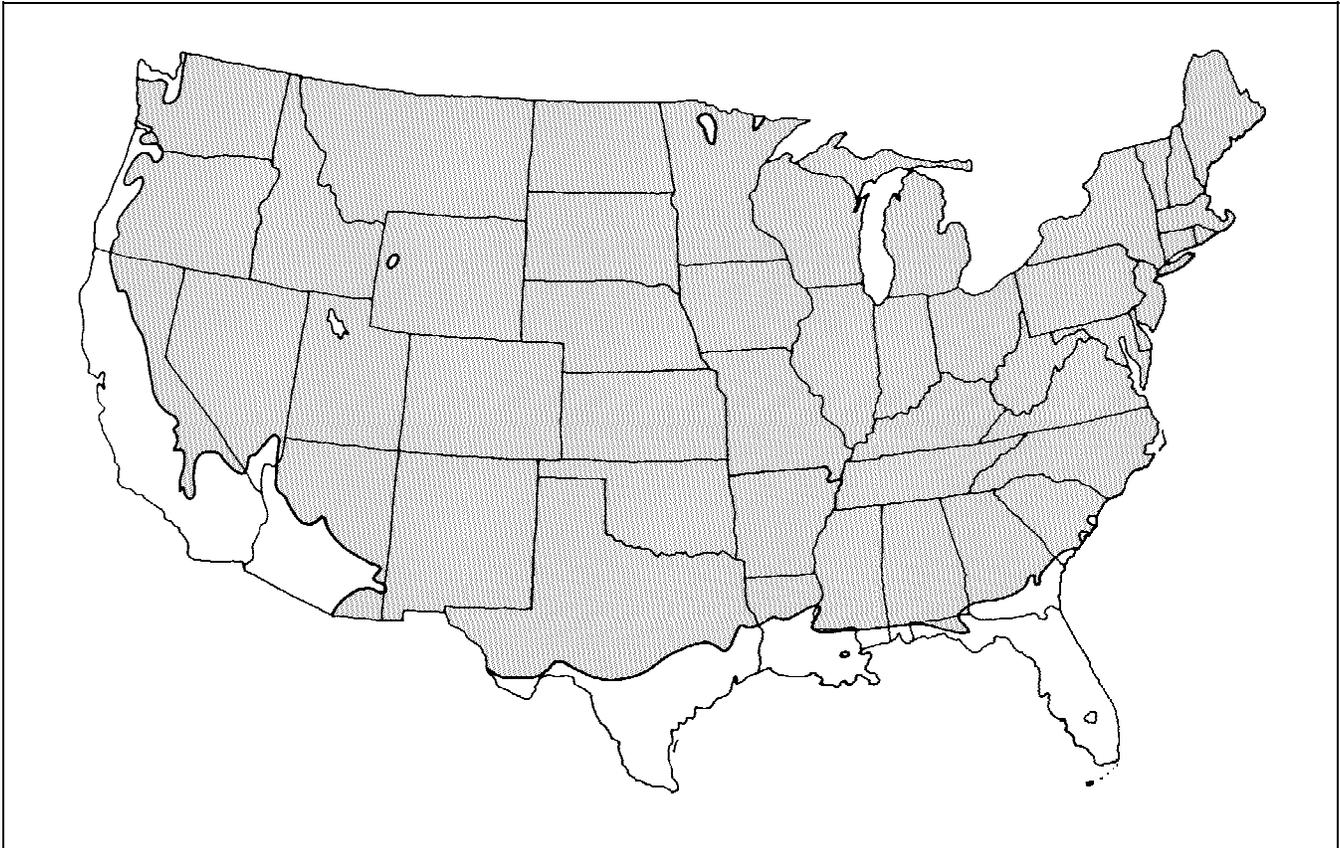
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 50 to 75 feet
Spread: 50 to 60 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: round; pyramidal
Crown density: open
Growth rate: slow
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: lobed
Leaf shape: fan-shaped
Leaf venation: parallel; palmate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: yellow
Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

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

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval; round
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: green; yellow
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife;
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; showy trunk; should be
grown with a single leader; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop
a strong structure
Breakage: resistant
**Current year twig color:** brown; gray
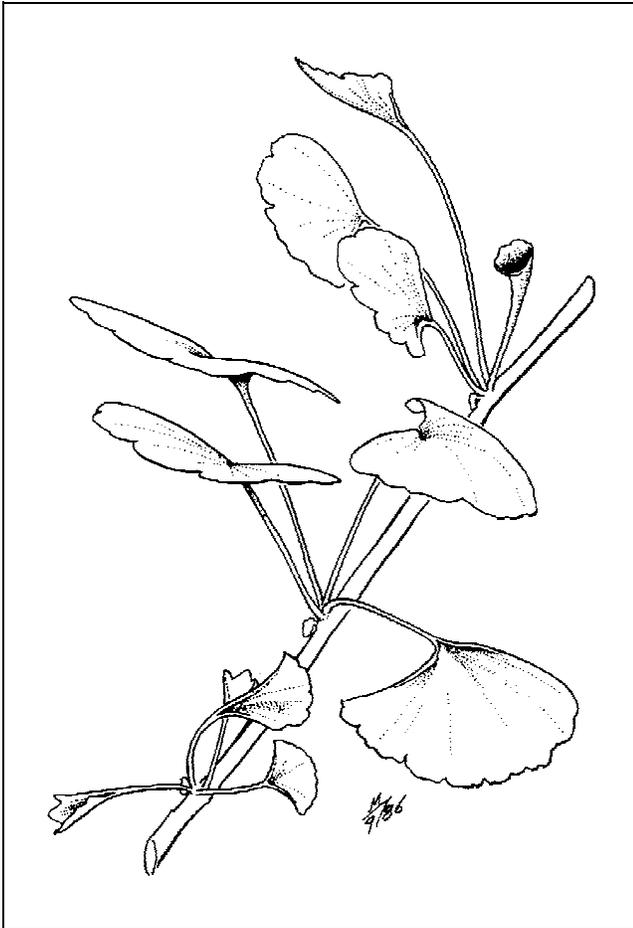
Figure 3. Foliage of Maidenhair Tree.

Current year twig thickness: medium; thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
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: little, if any, potential at this time
Ozone sensitivity: tolerant
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible
Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Female plants are wider-spreading than the males. Only male plants should be used as the female produces foul smelling fruit in late autumn. The only way to select a male plant is to purchase a named cultivar including 'Autumn Gold', ' Fastigiata', 'Princeton Sentry', and 'Lakeview' because there is no reliable way to select a male plant from a seedling until it fruits. It could take as long as 20 years or more for Ginkgo to fruit.

Ginkgo may grow extremely slow for several years after planting, but will then pick up and grow at a moderate rate, particularly if it receives an adequate supply of water and some fertilizer. But do not overwater or plant in a poorly-drained area. Be sure to keep turf several feet away from the trunk to help trees become established. Very tolerant of urban soils and pollution, Ginkgo could be used more in USDA hardiness zone 7 but is not recommended in central and southern Texas or Oklahoma due to summer heat. Adapted for use as a street tree, even in confined soil spaces. Some early pruning to form one central leader is essential.

There are several cultivars: 'Autumn Gold' - male, fruitless, bright gold fall color and rapid growth rate; 'Fairmont' - male, fruitless, upright, oval to pyramidal form; 'Fastigiata' - male, fruitless, upright growth; 'Laciniata' - leaf margins deeply divided; 'Lakeview' - male, fruitless, compact broad conical form; 'Mayfield' - male, upright fastigiate (columnar) growth; 'Pendula' - pendent branches; 'Princeton Sentry' - male, fruitless, fastigiate, narrow conical crown for restricted overhead spaces, popular, 65 feet tall, available in some nurseries; 'Santa Cruz' - umbrella-shaped, 'Variegata' - variegated leaves.

Propagation is by seed or grafting males.

Pests and Diseases

This tree is pest-free and considered resistant to gypsy moth.