



Grevillea robusta Silk-Oak¹

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INTRODUCTION

Reaching a height of 75 feet or more with a 25-foot spread, Silk-Oak is pyramidal to oval in shape, eventually developing a few heavy horizontal limbs and a thick trunk (Fig. 1). The light, ferny, grey-green leaves, silvery beneath, are accented by large clusters of bright yellow-orange flowers in spring. A great quantity of leaves fall in the spring immediately preceding the emergence of new growth and leaves also fall sporadically throughout the year, creating quite a litter problem to some people. Black, leathery seed capsules follow the flowers.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Grevillea robusta*

Pronunciation: grev-ILL-ee-uh roe-BUS-tuh

Common name(s): Silk-Oak

Family: *Proteaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: specimen; no proven urban tolerance

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

DESCRIPTION

Height: 60 to 100 feet

Spread: 25 to 30 feet

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

Crown shape: oval; pyramidal

Crown density: moderate

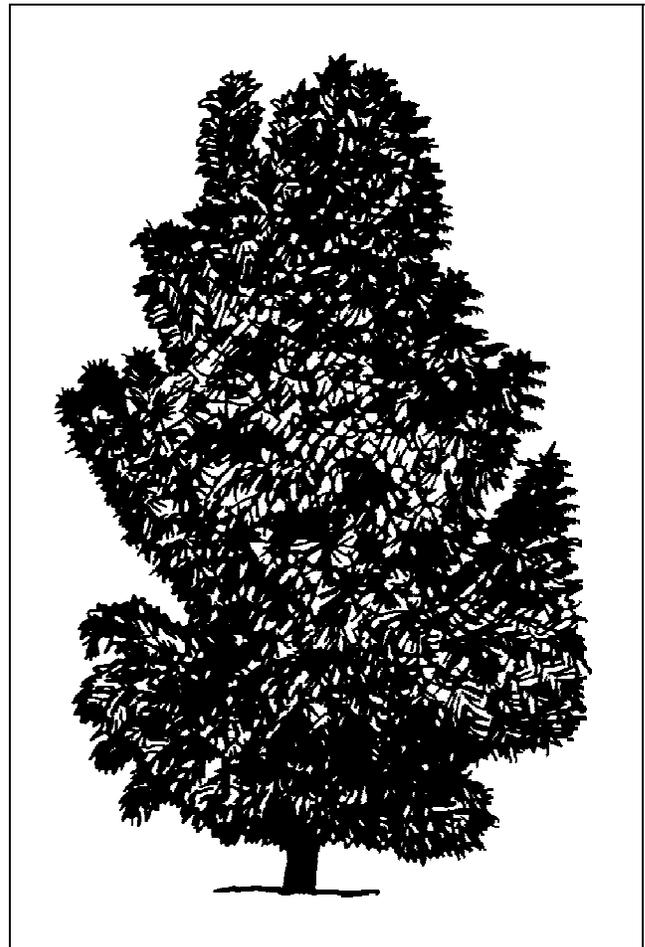


Figure 1. Middle-aged Silk-Oak.

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: odd pinnately compound
Leaflet margin: parted; revolute
Leaflet shape: lanceolate
Leaflet venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaflet blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: orange; yellow
Flower characteristics: showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: black
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
Breakage: susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break
Current year twig color: brown; gray
Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

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

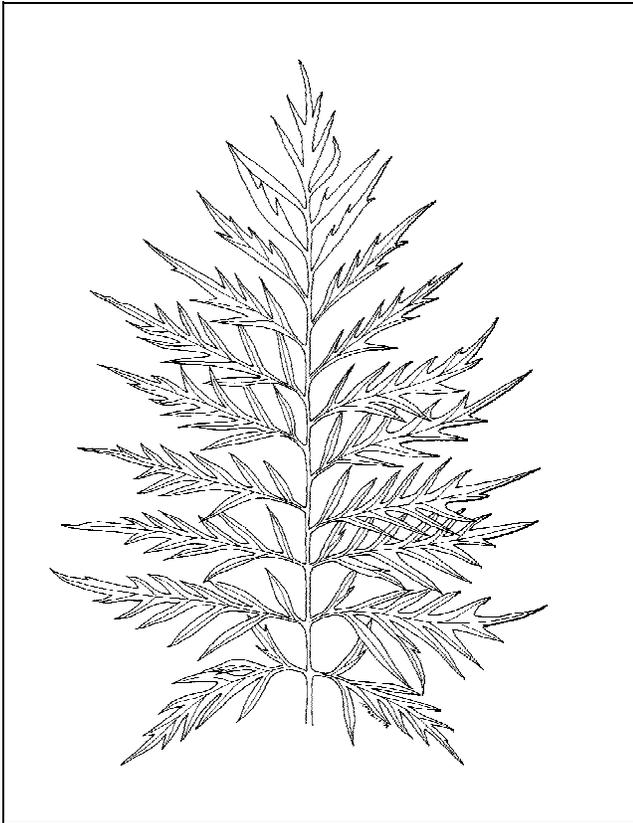


Figure 3. Foliage of Silk-Oak.

Propagation is by seed. For best results, extract seed from mature, unopened follicles and plant immediately.

Pests

Caterpillars.

Diseases

Mushroom root rot on poorly-drained soils.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

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

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Silk-Oak works as a specimen in large, open landscapes but probably should not be located near houses due to their large size, messy habit, and the brittleness of the wood as it ages. Tops of trees are known to snap out of the tree in high winds. It is a valuable timber tree in its native Australia, growing to more than 125 feet tall.

Quick-growing Silk-Oak requires full sun and sandy, well-drained soils to perform its best, developing mushroom root rot in poorly-drained, wet soils. Silk-Oak thrives in heat and is quite tolerant of drought. It grows extremely well in southern California where it easily reaches 100 feet tall. Tall trees are often hit by lightning in Florida.