



Laburnum spp. Goldenchain Tree¹

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INTRODUCTION

This is an airy, graceful, deciduous tall shrub or small tree, growing to a maximum of 20 to 25 feet, with rich, yellow wisteria-like, drooping flower panicles, up to 10 inches long, which appear in late spring or early summer (Fig. 1). The tree is truly incredible in full bloom. It is difficult to grow but if tried should be grown in a spot protected from full day sun, with very well-drained, alkaline pH soil and high organic matter. It tolerates alkaline soil but not wet soil, and does not grow well in soil below pH 7.0.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Laburnum* spp.

Pronunciation: luh-BER-num species

Common name(s): Goldenchain Tree

Family: Leguminosae

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

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; espalier; near a deck or patio; specimen

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

DESCRIPTION

Height: 20 to 25 feet

Spread: 12 to 18 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: upright

Crown density: open

Growth rate: medium



Figure 1. Middle-aged Goldenchain Tree.

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: odd pinnately compound; trifoliate

Leaflet margin: entire

Leaflet shape: elliptic (oval); obovate

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaflet venation: pinnate; reticulate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaflet blade length: 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristics: spring flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; pod

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

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; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: loam; sand; alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Soil salt tolerance: poor

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

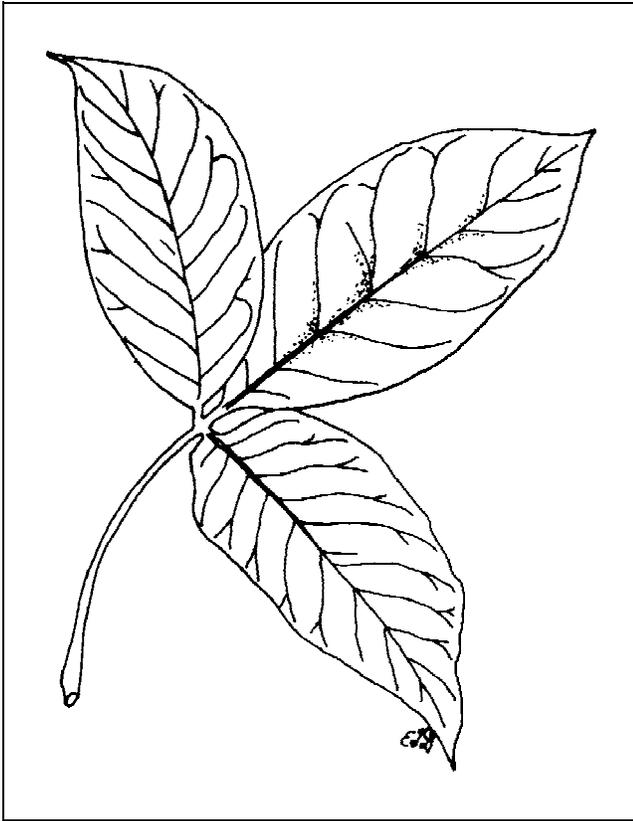


Figure 3. Foliage of Goldenchain Tree.

Diseases

Leaf spot, laburnum vein mosaic and especially twig blight can be problems. Leaf-scald can also be a problem where bark is exposed to afternoon sun in winter. Root rot is also a problem in soil kept too moist.

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

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

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Goldenchain Tree is a good specimen, patio or border accent tree, and can also be espaliered against a wall. In USDA hardiness zone 7, young plants are extremely attractive but do not usually last long since the plant does not tolerate heat well. All parts of the plant are poisonous. Use as a novelty where a brightly-colored accent is needed in the spring. Do not overwater.

Laburnum alpinum is a related tree which is just as beautiful in flower.

Pests

Tree can be attacked by aphids or mealy-bugs.