



Osmanthus americanus Devilwood¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

A native to the southeastern United States, Devilwood is a very attractive, small evergreen tree which is most commonly seen at 15 to 25 feet in height and sports lush, dark, olive green leaves throughout the year (Fig. 1). It is occasionally seen 30 to 40 feet tall in its native habitat and grows slowly. The clusters of small, white, fragrant, early springtime flowers are followed by the production of small, dark blue drupes, ripening in fall and persisting on the tree until the following spring, if not first consumed by birds and other wildlife. Its ease of growth, pest-resistance, attractive foliage and flowers, and wildlife-attracting fruits would make Devilwood a popular choice for naturalizing or the mixed shrubby border. The trees tolerate heavy pruning particularly well and may also be used as a hedge. Devilwood is so-named because the fine-textured wood is difficult to split and hard to work.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Osmanthus americanus*

Pronunciation: oz-MANTH-us uh-mair-ih-KAY-nus

Common name(s): Devilwood, Wild-Olive

Family: *Oleaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: hedge; 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; near a deck

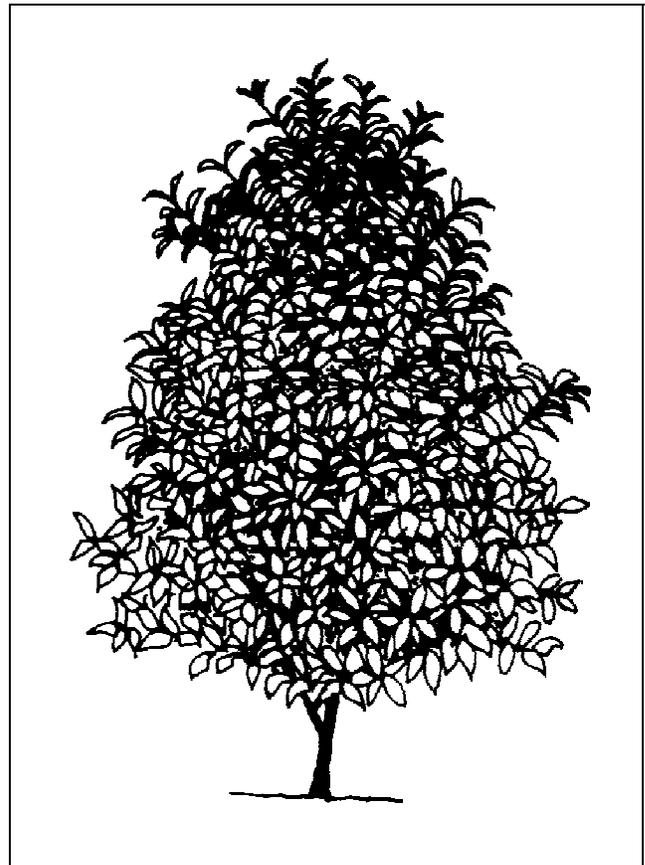


Figure 1. Young Devilwood.

or patio; reclamation plant; screen; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

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

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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.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

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

Crown shape: round; vase shape

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: medium

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); lanceolate; ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: blue

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree

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; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

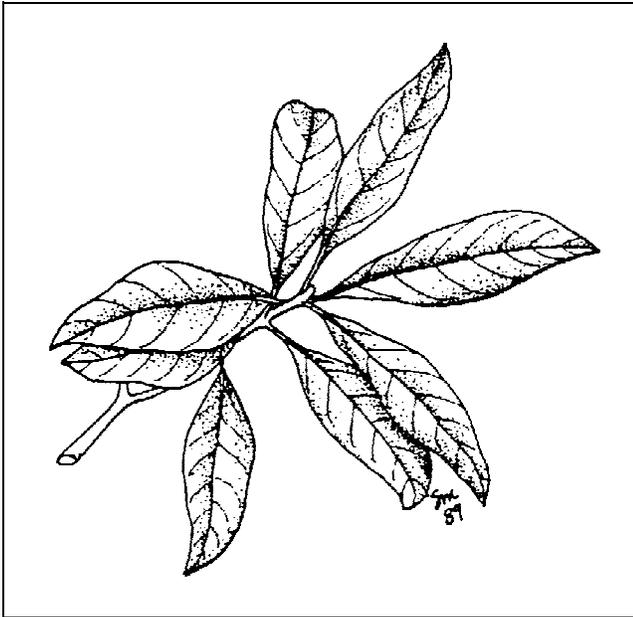


Figure 3. Foliage of Devilwood.

Current year twig color: brown; green

Current year twig thickness: thick

Culture

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

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: high

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

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the
tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Naturally found along streambanks or swamp margins, Devilwood should be grown in full sun or partial shade on moist, well-drained soil. Drought tolerance is moderate once established. The tree is probably as shade tolerant as any osmanthus. Not tested as an urban tree but may have some merit in wet soils.

Propagation is by cuttings or seed, and is difficult by either.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.