



Terminalia catappa Tropical-Almond¹

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INTRODUCTION

Tropical-Almond is a 30 to 55-foot-tall, deciduous tree which forms a symmetrical, upright silhouette in youth with horizontal branches reaching 35 feet in width (Fig. 1). The branches are arranged in obvious tiers, giving the tree a pagoda-like shape. As the tree grows older, the crown spreads and flattens on the top to form a wide-spreading vase shape. The large, 12-inch-long and six-inch-wide, glossy green, leathery leaves change to beautiful shades of red, yellow, and purple before dropping in winter. Due to their large size, these old leaves may be considered a nuisance to some people. The leaves are quickly replaced by new growth so the tree is bare for only a short period of time. The inconspicuous, greenish-white, springtime blossoms appear in six-inch-long terminal clusters and are followed by the edible fruits. These drupes are 2.5 inches long and mature from green to yellow or red during the summer. The outside husk is corky fiber with an inner thin green flesh. The inside holds the edible, almond-like kernel. The fruit is high in tannic acid and this could stain cars, pavement and sidewalks. It also causes significant litter on the ground.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Terminalia catappa*

Pronunciation: ter-mih-NAIL-ee-uh kuh-TAP-uh

Common name(s): Tropical-Almond, India-Almond

Family: *Combretaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200

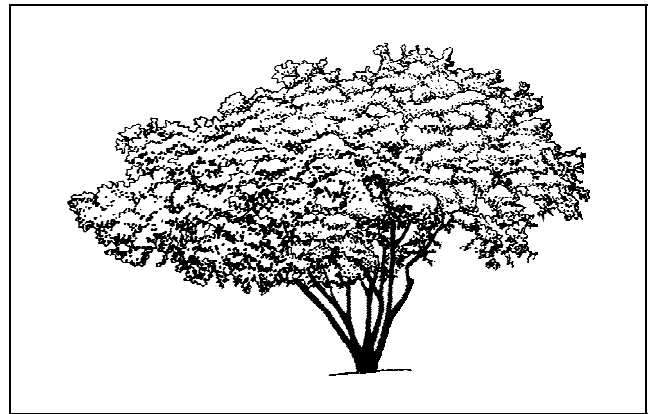


Figure 1. Mature Tropical-Almond.

square feet in size); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; shade tree; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

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

DESCRIPTION

Height: 30 to 45 feet

Spread: 35 to 50 feet

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

Crown shape: spreading; pyramidal

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: medium

Texture: coarse

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: obovate

Leaf venation: banchidodrome; pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: red

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: green

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; oval

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: tan

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; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop 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; green

Current year twig thickness: stout; thick

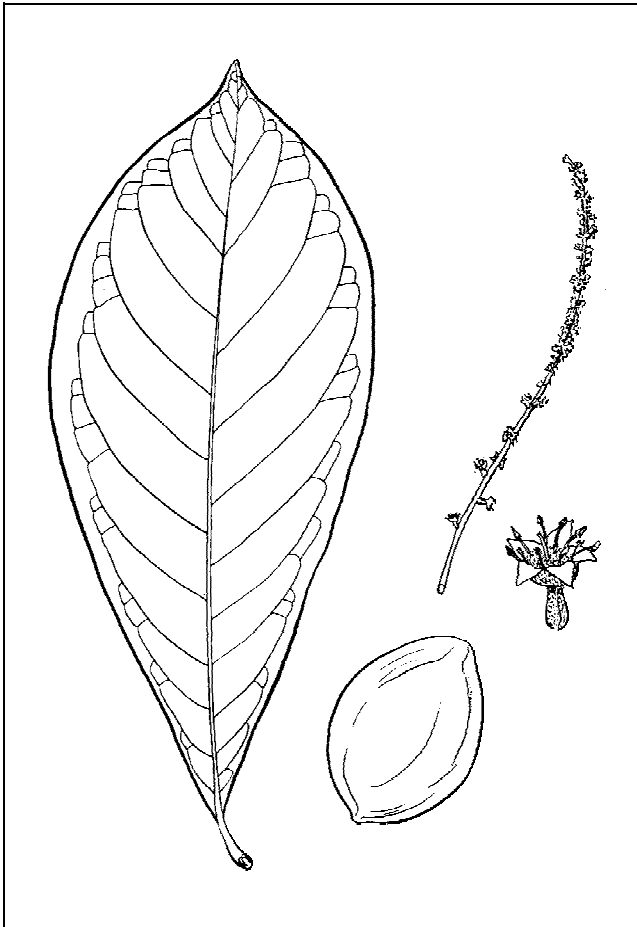


Figure 3. Foliage of Tropical-Almond.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: high

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: No entries found.

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

USE AND MANAGEMENT

The tree may be best suited for planting along the coast as a park or shade tree providing dense shade. People may object to the large leaves and the fruit that falls from the tree if the tree is used as a street tree, and the tannic acid may be a problem near parked cars. Branches droop and require regular maintenance to keep them pruned to allow for vehicle clearance beneath the canopy. However, it would make a nice tree for a median or along a boulevard where this would cause less of a nuisance.

Tropical-Almond should be grown in full sun on any well-drained soil. Plants are quite tolerant of wind, salt, and drought but do need protection from freezing temperatures. Trees perform best if mulched and regularly fertilized.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests

Thrips are a pest of this tree.

Diseases

Leaf spot disease is a problem with this tree.