

Araucaria araucana Monkey-Puzzletree¹

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INTRODUCTION

Monkey-Puzzletree is a large, bizarre evergreen, 60 to 70 feet tall and 30 to 35 feet wide, which forms a loose, see-through, pyramidal shape with a straight trunk (Fig. 1). The tree is so open in habit you could almost look at it and not see it. The leaves are dark green, stiff, with sharp needles densely arranged on horizontal, irregular, upwardly-sweeping branches. Monkey-Puzzletree makes an attractive, novelty specimen for a large, open yard or commercial landscape. It is normally planted only as an oddity someplace in the rear of a landscape out of view from most passers-by but could be the specimen feature in a large oriental landscape.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Araucaria araucana*

Pronunciation: air-ah-KAIR-ee-uh air-ah-KAY-nuh

Common name(s): Monkey-Puzzletree

Family: *Araucariaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: suitable for growing indoors; specimen

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

DESCRIPTION

Height: 60 to 70 feet

Spread: 30 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: pyramidal

Crown density: open

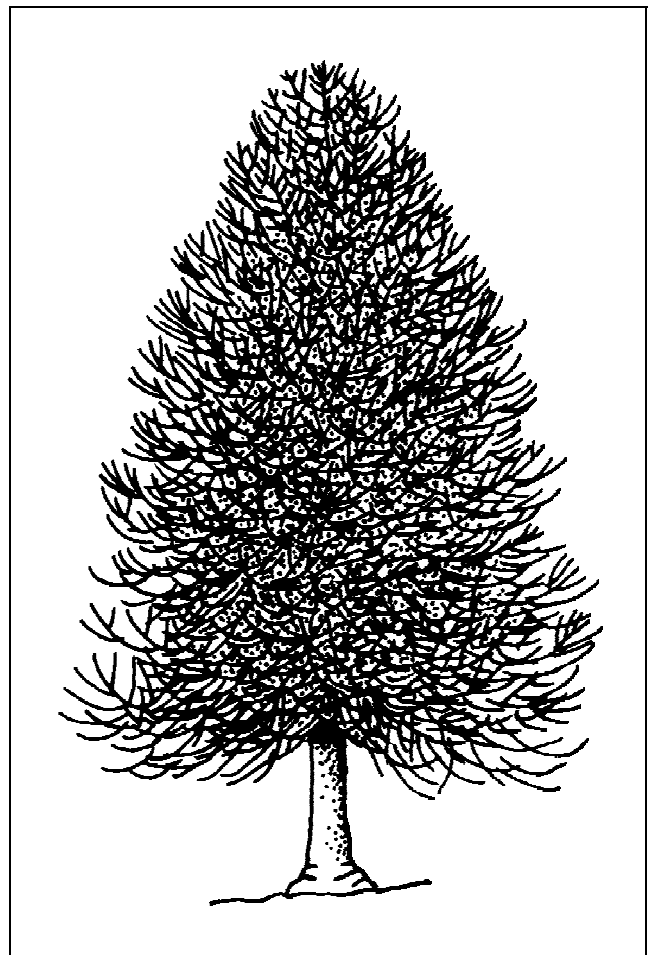


Figure 1. Mature Monkey-Puzzletree.

Growth rate: medium

Texture: coarse

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: lanceolate; ovate

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen; needle leaf evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: 6 to 12 inches; 3 to 6 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown; tan

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

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: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown; green

Current year twig thickness: medium; thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

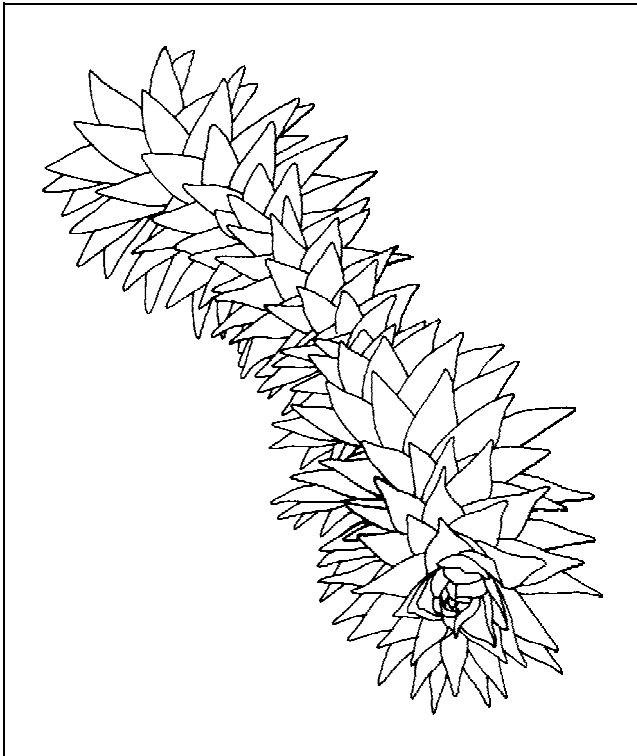


Figure 3. Foliage of Monkey-Puzzletree.

Other

Roots: surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing

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

Monkey-Puzzletree should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil and receive regular waterings. It tolerates some drought and will grow well in clay soil.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Scales, sooty mold, leaf spots.