Fact Sheet ST-400
October 1994

Malus hupehensis
Tea Crabapple[1]

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson[2]

INTRODUCTION

Flowering Tea Crabapple is composed of strong, spreading branches which form a broad, vase-shaped silhouette, 15 to 20 feet tall and 20 feet wide (Fig. 1). The main branches are usually trained to grow from one point on the trunk and these grow long and branch infrequently, forming an open canopy which allows light to easily pass. Abundant fragrant, light pink to white blooms appear in springtime, each 1.5-inch-diameter blossom starting out as a tight, deep pink bud. The small, half-inch fruits which follow are outstanding, their greenish-yellow faces endowed with blushing red cheeks. Fruit is very attractive to birds. The dark grey/brown, flaking bark is quite attractive and is shown off to its best advantage when the trees are grown in containers or as an espalier.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Malus hupehensis*
Pronunciation: MAY-lus hew-peh-EN-sis
Common name(s): Tea Crabapple, Flowering Tea Crabapple
Family: *Rosaceae*
USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 8A (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: Bonsai; container or above-ground planter; espalier; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

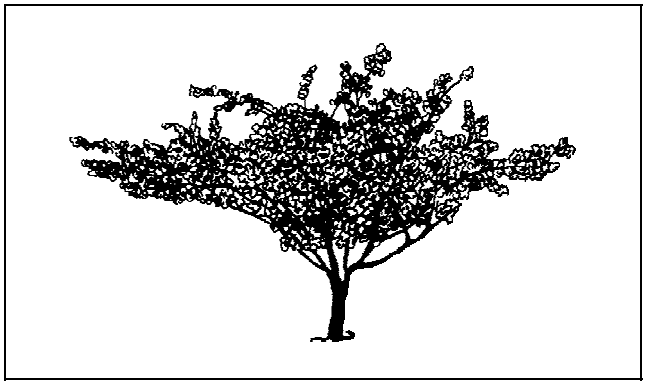

Figure 1. Middle-aged Tea Crabapple.

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

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 20 feet
Spread: 15 to 20 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: spreading; vase shape
Crown density: open
Growth rate: medium
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: serrate
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); obovate
Leaf venation: banchidodrome; pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-400, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.

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.

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: yellow
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: pink; white
Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; spring flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: < .5 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: red; yellow
Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

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; showy trunk; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: brown
Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

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

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

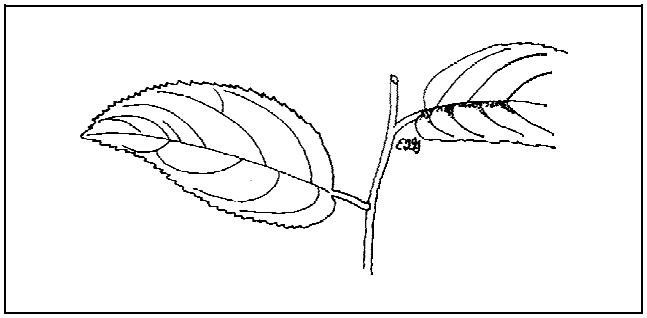

Figure 3. Foliage of Tea Crabapple.

Ozone sensitivity: sensitive or moderately tolerant
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Crabapples are also useful as median trees where the fruit will fall away from pedestrians. Placed in the lawn area as an accent so they receive occasional irrigation, Crabapple will give you years of wonderful flowers and showy fruit. It is best to locate them away from a patio or other hard surface so the fruits will not fall and cause a mess. Set it back just far enough so the crown will not overhang the walk, but close enough so the flowers and fruit can be enjoyed.

Some training and pruning is required to develop good branch structure. Pruning should be completed before late spring, to ensure dormant flower buds are not removed. Unpruned, open-grown trees branch low and these branches droop to touch the ground. The spreading canopy makes this tree best suited for specimen use. It should be occasionally thinned to eliminate water sprouts or crossed-branches. This allows for better air circulation through the crown and helps reduce disease.

Flowering Tea Crabapple grows in moist, well-drained, acid soil in full sun locations for best flowering. They are not recommended for sandy soil due to their inability to tolerate extended drought, but any other soil is suitable, including well-drained clay. Not city tolerant. Crabapples grow well in the Texas panhandle but are not extremely drought tolerant and are not well suited for high pH soil.

Contact the Ornamental Crabapple Society, Morton Arboretum, Lisle, Illinois 60532 for more information on Crabapples.

Propagated by seed.

Pests

Aphids infest branch tips and suck plant juices.

Fall webworm makes nests on the branches and feeds inside the nest. Small nests can be pruned out or sprayed with *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

Scales of various types are usually controlled with horticultural oil.

Mites are too small to see easily so can cause much foliage discoloration before being detected. Mites are usually controlled with horticultural oil.

Tent caterpillar builds tents or nests in trees in early summer or late spring. Feeding occurs outside the nest. Small nests are pruned out or simply pulled from the tree and caterpillars crushed. Do not burn nests while they are still in the tree since this injures the tree and could start an uncontrolled fire.

Diseases

There is some susceptibility to fire blight.

Scab infection takes place early in the season and dark olive green spots appear on the leaves. In late summer the infected leaves fall off when they turn yellow with black, spots. Infected fruits have black, slightly raised spots.

Fire blight susceptible trees have blighted branch tips. Leaves on infected branch tips turn brown or black, droop, and hang on the branches. The leaves look scorched as by a fire. The trunk and main branches become infected when the bacteria are washed down the branches. Cankers form and are separated from adjacent healthy bark by a crack. The infected bark may be shredded.

Powdery mildew is a fungus which coats leaves with mycelia resembling white powder.

Rust causes brown to rusty-orange spots on the leaves. Badly spotted leaves fall prematurely. Redcedars are the alternate host.

Crabapples are subject to several canker diseases. Prune out infected branches, avoid unnecessary wounding, and keep trees healthy.