American Hornbeam

Carpinus caroliniana

American Hornbeam
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 30 feet

Spread: 25 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐ ●

Hardiness Zone: 3b

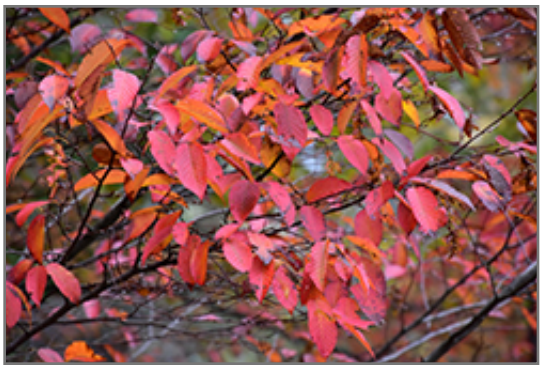
Other Names: Blue Beech, Ironwood, Musclewood, Water Beech

Description:

A beautiful and underused native woodland tree; very interesting gray bark is almost muscular in appearance, makes a strong winter statement; also excellent blend of fall colors and curious hop-like fruit; good small multipurpose shade tree

Ornamental Features

The American Hornbeam has forest green deciduous foliage on a tree with a round habit of growth. The pointy leaves turn an outstanding orange in the fall. It produces small clusters of tan hop-like fruit from early fall to late winter. The smooth silvery blue bark adds an interesting dimension to the landscape.



American Hornbeam in fall
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

The American Hornbeam is a deciduous tree with a more or less rounded form. Its average texture blends into the landscape, but can be balanced by one or two finer or coarser trees or shrubs for an effective composition.

This is a relatively low maintenance tree, and is best pruned in late winter once the threat of extreme cold has passed. It has no significant negative characteristics.

The American Hornbeam is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Shade
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens

Planting & Growing

The American Hornbeam will grow to be about 30 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 25 feet. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 4 feet from the ground, and should not be planted underneath power lines. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 80 years or more.

This tree performs well in both full sun and full shade. It is an amazingly adaptable plant, tolerating both dry conditions and even some standing water. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is native to parts of North America.

American Hornbeam bark
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder