



American Yellowwood (*Cladrastis kentukea* (prior name *C. lutea*))

Alex X. Niemiera, Professor, School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech

Summary

Foliage: Deciduous broadleaf

Height: 50 feet

Spread: 55 feet

Shape: Vase-shaped

This vase-shaped medium tree has smooth bark and showy white flowers in the spring. It is also quite drought and alkaline soil tolerant.

Plant Needs

Zone: 4 to 9

Light: Partial shade to full sun

Moisture: Moist to dry

Soil Type: Sandy, loam, or clay loam

pH Range: 4.5 to 8.0

Functions

Suggested uses for this plant include shade tree and specimen plant.

Planting Notes

Plant in well-drained, moist soil, preferably in full sun. Tolerates wide range of soil pH.

Care

Prune only in summer. Winter or spring pruning results in profuse bleeding. This species typically has a branch structure (tight branch angles) that results in limbs breaking from the tree. To avoid this, develop a good branch system in the tree's early life; as the tree ages, remove about 10% of small branches every other year to lighten the load of the major branch system.

Remove dead or damaged wood as soon as possible.

Problems

No serious disease or insect problems.

Alternatives

Consult garden centers, historic or public gardens and arboreta regarding cultivars and related species that grow well in your area.

Cultivars of *Cladrastis kentukea*

'Rosea' ('Perkins Pink') is a pink flowered cultivar.

Comments

American yellowwood is a medium-sized tree with very showy, pendulous white, pea-like flowers in late spring.

This species will bloom heavily every other year. Even in years of a light bloom, it is prized for its form and tolerance of adverse conditions.

This material was developed by Carol Ness as part of the Interactive Design and Development Project funded by the Kellogg Foundation.

