

American Hophornbeam (*ostrya virginiana*)



Hardiness zones: 3-9
Height: 25-40 feet
Spread: 20-30 feet
Flower color: brown/green
Fall color: green/yellow/brown
Soil moisture: medium
Soil type: average, medium, well-drained
Light: full sun to part shade
Growth rate: slow
Shape: pyramid to rounded
Drought tolerance: high

This deciduous Missouri native tolerates some of the worst growing conditions thanks to its extreme adaptability. If a carefree shade tree is what your yard needs, the American Hophornbeam should fit the bill. Sometimes referred to as the Ironwood because of its extremely dense wood, this tree will provide a nice, low maintenance feature to your landscape.



Male catkins



Clusters of mature seeds resemble fruit of the hops plant.



Bark of the immature American Hophornbeam

This species makes an excellent street shade tree. While its dense foliage is its strong point, the fruit and flowers of the Hophornbeam provide added visual interest and are the basis for part of the tree's name. This tree is monoecious (\mə-NĒ-shəs), meaning the male flower and female flower, or catkins, appear on the same tree. The male catkins remain on the tree throughout the year. The female catkins develop into seed pods that closely resemble the fruit of the hops plant. Both catkins provide year-round color ranging from lime green to beige, yellow and brown. The "flaky" bark of the immature Hophornbeam also contributes to the unique look of this species.



Leaves emerge a vibrant lime green (left), then mature to a deep lustrous green (right)



Russet brown color of the Hophornbeam in fall

The American Hophornbeam is a rugged tree that grows well in a variety of conditions, including poor soils such as those typically found in urban settings. This characteristic, coupled with a resistance to serious pests and diseases makes the Hophornbeam ideal for city plantings. Once established, this birch-like, medium sized understory tree requires little care and is quite drought tolerant. The American Hophornbeam is slow growing and works well in small areas such as medians and sidewalk tree pits. All of these qualities combined with low maintenance make this the perfect shade tree for urban settings.