

Japanese Stewartia, *Stewartia pseudocamellia*

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Summary

Foliage: About 2 inches long; deciduous

Height: About 20 feet

Spread: About 8 feet

Shape: Upright oval

Main Features

Japanese stewartia is a strikingly beautiful small tree. It has very showy white flowers with gold-colored stamens in June; bright maroon-red fall foliage color; and with age develops bark with a patchwork of brown, orange-brown, and cream colors. Bark characteristics vary from tree to tree and some trees have lustrous bark. This species is noteworthy for the bark alone, but the handsome foliage (in autumn as well as the growing season), showy flowers, and bark truly make this a tree that can be admired twelve months a year. Japanese stewartia is a slow-growing species and requires a well-drained soil that has ample organic matter. While this tree will grow in full sun, the most handsome individuals I have come across were in sites that had afternoon shade.

Plant Needs

Zone: 5 to 7

Light: Full sun to part shade

Moisture: Average

Soil type: Average with ample organic matter

pH range: Acid

Functions

Japanese stewartia is certainly worthy to be a specimen tree (sufficient showy attributes to be featured alone) and will be a handsome species wherever a small tree species is needed.

Care

If planted in a well-drained, high organic matter content and non-droughty soil, Japanese stewartia requires very little care with the exception of supplemental irrigation during drought periods. This species has very few pest problems.

Additional Information

Japanese stewartia is relatively uncommon in garden centers but is worth the hunt to locate. Since this species is slow growing and has exacting cultural conditions, it is relatively expensive but well worth the extra money. One must have patience for the tree to develop showy bark (about 10 years). There are other less common stewartia species in the nursery trade such as tall stewartia (*S. monadelphica*),

Korean stewartia (*S. koreana*), and Chinese stewartia (*S. chinensis*); they are all outstanding landscape plant choices that you may need to special order from your local garden center or purchase from a mail order specialty nursery.