



Red Buckeye, *Aesculus pavia*

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

Summary

Foliage: About 6 inches long; opposite; palmately compound; deciduous

Height: About 15 feet

Spread: About 15 feet

Shape: Round to oval round

Main Features

Red buckeye is typically a multi-trunk small tree (large shrub). Its claim to fame is the red flowers that cover the plant in April/May. Flower stalks (panicles) are about 8 inches long with 2 inch long red tubular flowers. Flowers are pollinated by ruby-throated hummingbirds. A mature tree in flower is a sight to behold. Fruit (“buckeyes”), about 2 inches in diameter, are round to oval and are poisonous; apparently the foliage is poisonous as well. Native to the eastern U.S., red buckeye is an understory species (grows in the shade of taller trees). However, this species can be grown in full sun as well.

Plant Needs

Zone: 4 to 8

Light: Full sun to full shade (plants will be more open in shady conditions)

Moisture: Average to moist

Soil type: Average

pH range: Acid to somewhat alkaline

Functions

Red buckeye can be used as a specimen plant (sufficient attributes to be featured as a focal point) due to its showy flowers and handsome foliage. However, leaves tend to drop from tree in the early fall and may look ratty in poor or droughty soils. This species is an excellent choice for an understory planting.

Care

Other than supplemental irrigation during drought periods, this species is relatively carefree.

Additional Information

Seeds (buckeyes) are attractive (lustrous brown) and poisonous; thus, this species should not be planted near children’s play areas.