Hornbeam, (American) Fire King

Carpinus caroliniana 'J.N. Select A'



Hornbeam, (American) Fire King
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 30 feet

Spread: 20 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 3b

Other Names: Ironwood, Musclewood

Description:

An impressive upright form of this native American tree that becomes more rounded with age; interesting gray bark is almost muscular in appearance; excellent orange-red fall color and curious hop-like fruit; a great shade tree for smaller areas

Ornamental Features

Hornbeam, (American) Fire King has forest green deciduous foliage on a tree with an oval habit of growth. The serrated pointy leaves turn outstanding shades of orange and in the fall. It produces small clusters of brick red hop-like fruit from early fall to late winter, which fade to brown over time. The fruit can be messy if allowed to drop on the lawn or walkways, and may require occasional clean-up. The smooth silvery blue bark adds an interesting dimension to the landscape.



Hornbeam, (American) Fire King foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Hornbeam, (American) Fire King is a deciduous tree with a shapely oval 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 is a good choice for attracting birds and squirrels to your yard. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Hornbeam, (American) Fire King is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Shade
- Hedges/Screening

Planting & Growing

Hornbeam, (American) Fire King will grow to be about 30 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 20 feet. It has a high canopy of foliage that sits well above the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. As it matures, the lower branches of this tree can be strategically removed to create a high enough canopy to support unobstructed human traffic underneath. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 80 years or more.

This tree does best in full sun to partial shade. It is quite adaptable, prefering to grow in average to wet conditions, and will even tolerate some standing water. This plant should be periodically fertilized throughout the active growing season with a specially-formulated acidic fertilizer. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This is a selection of a native North American species.

Clean up Rating (1-5) 1=least effort 5=most effort

Clean Up Rating (3): Hornbeam get green catkins and bloom in spring. Male flowers are 1 to 1½ inches long and female flowers are 2 to 3 inches long. The seed is a very small, hard, nutlet. Each seed is inside a leafy, three-lobed winged chains about 4 to 6 inches long, hanging. Clean up can be blowing or raking onto the lawn and mow or bag.