

Craig's Corner

Our in-house horticulturist/arborist, Craig Miller, dispenses practical advice for those seeking to simultaneously conserve water

and grow thriving, high-visual-impact, droughttolerant (xeriscape) gardens and landscapes.

Please email questions to craig@cpnmd.org.

METROPOLITAN DISTRICT™

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PROPER SELECTION AND PLANTING OF TREES

To give the "instant tree" appearance, larger-caliper trees are often the choice for homeowners. However, the root systems of larger trees also take longer to redevelop in the establishment phase of the life cycle before the trees shift into the growth phase. For this reason, smaller trees are recommended, especially where less than ideal growing conditions exist.

In our climate, with good planting techniques and good soil conditions, it typically takes one growing season per inch of trunk caliper (measured at 6 inches above soil line) for roots



There is plenty of truth in the old adage "dig a fifty-dollar hole for a five-dollar tree".

to establish following transplanting. That is, a one-inch caliper tree will take one season for the roots to establish, while a three-inch caliper tree will take three seasons. On sites with poor soils and poor planting techniques, the establishment phase may be longer, and trees must live off carbohydrate reserves until roots become established.

In recent years, poor planting techniques have killed more trees than any insect or disease outbreak. For best results and survivability of the tree, follow these planting guidelines: https://cmg.extension.colostate.edu/Gardennotes/633.pdf.



XERIC PLANT OF THE MONTH

Wafer Ash (*Ptelea trifoliata* - pronounced TEA-lee-uh), also known as common hop tree, stinking ash, and skunk bush, is native to Colorado south of Colorado Springs from 5,000' to 9,000', and along rocky stream banks, canyons, and ravines in Oklahoma, Texas, Arizona and New Mexico. In spite of its name, it is not related to the white and green Ash trees (*Fraxinus* spp.) that are so commonly planted in Colorado, and now endangered by the Emerald Ash Borer.



It is a small tree, 10'-15' tall and wide, often multi-trunked. The leaves are ash-like, shiny, and deep green with leaflets grouped in threes (trifoliate). These leaves have a pungent, hop-like fragance if crushed and turn a beautiful yellow in the fall. The effect of the rich yellow blanket of leaves under the bare tree, which has a cherry tree-like bark, can be stunning.

The small flowers are greenish-white in 2" clusters and bloom in June with a pleasant vanilla fragrance that becomes stronger as the tree gets bigger and bears more flowers. These flowers are not showy, but the circular winged seeds (wafers) that follow in late summer are conspicuous and ornamental. The fruit ripens in October and is held on the tree until winds shake them loose in early winter. These flat fruits have been used as a hops substitute. *Ptelea* can be grown in very dry soils and will do well in full sun and light shade. It can withstand somewhat-degraded habitats. The root system of the Wafer Ash is branching, but its runners do not produce suckers.

