

Plant Profiles: HORT 2242 Landscape Plants II

Botanical Name: *Ginkgo biloba*

Common Name: ginkgo

Family Name: Ginkgoaceae – ginkgo family

General Description: Considered a “living fossil”, *Ginkgo biloba* is one of the oldest trees on earth. Through fossil records it is known to have been growing since the age of dinosaurs and has remained remarkably unchanged in appearance throughout the ages. Native to eastern China, it is now thought to be extinct in the wild. However, ginkgo is a reliable, hardy, urban tolerant tree that can be found planted as an ornamental throughout temperate and subtropical regions of the world. In the Chicago area *Ginkgo biloba* is a common street tree valued for its salt and pollution tolerance and for its ability to withstand both cold and heat. There are a myriad of cultivars available in the trade and care should be given to selecting male forms as the female trees produce a foul smelling seed.

Zone: 4-8(9)

Resources Consulted:

Dirr, Michael A. *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants: Their Identification, Ornamental Characteristics, Culture, Propagation and Uses*. Champaign: Stipes, 2009. Print.

Earle, C.J., ed. "Ginkgo biloba." *The Gymnosperm Database*. N.p., 2013. Web. 19 Feb. 2014.

The Ginkgo Pages. N.p., 2014. Web. 19 Feb. 2014.

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Creation Date: 2014

Keywords/Tags: Ginkgoaceae, tree, conifer, deciduous, ginkgo biloba, ginkgo



Whole plant/Habit:

- Description: *Ginkgo biloba* is a large deciduous tree. It has an awkward irregular habit when young but generally matures into a majestic somewhat pyramidal tree. The form, however, can vary.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: August 29, 2008
- Image File Name: ginkgo_1040355.png



Whole plant/Habit:

- Description: Ginkgo is dioecious meaning it has separate male trees and female trees. The male trees are reported to be more upright, the female trees more rounded. Again, this characteristic varies and cannot be relied on to verify the gender of the tree.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: November 5, 2011
- Image File Name: ginkgo_1340298.png



Bark:

- Description: The gray bark is ridged and furrowed.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: February 29, 2004
- Image File Name: ginkgo_0793.png



Branch/Twig:

- Description: The young stems of ginkgo are light brown and alternate.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: April 23, 2004
- Image File Name: ginkgo_4147.png



Branch/Twig:

- Description: Older stems develop very obvious and distinctive dark gray spurs. The spurs are a reliable identification feature.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: February 29, 2004
- Image File Name: ginkgo_0802.png



Bud:

- Description: The buds of both young and old stems are reddish-brown, globose, with an acute tip.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: October 5, 2009
- Image File Name: ginkgo_5515.png



Flower:

- Description: As a gymnosperm, *Ginkgo biloba* does not produce true flowers although they are loosely referred to as such. It is dioecious, meaning some trees produce only male pollen cones (on left) with the seed bearing structures produced on separate trees. Occasionally both genders are found on the same tree. Male pollen cones are catkin-like, green and inconspicuous.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: April 23, 2004
- Image File Name: ginkgo_4183.png



Flower:

- Description: The female “flower” is also inconspicuous. According to the *Ginkgo Pages* website, when it is ready for pollination a droplet is released from inside the ovule to catch the pollen.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: May 4, 2004
- Image File Name: ginkgo_4525.png



Seed:

- Description: The “fruit” is actually a naked seed with a fleshy outer covering. They are attached to a long peduncle and mature in one season.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: June 14, 2009
- Image File Name: ginkgo_2800.png



Seed:

- Description: They are the size, shape and color of an apricot. The fleshy outer coat of the seed has a foul smell as it matures in autumn. For this reason it is recommended to plant only male forms. However, ginkgo often does not “fruit” until it is 20 or more years old so it can be difficult to know the gender until it is too late!
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: October 19, 2009
- Image File Name: ginkgo_5918.png



Seed:

- Description: The large nut-like seed is considered to be a delicacy and can be purchased in specialty markets.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: September 13, 2011
- Image File Name: ginkgo_1330776.png



Leaf/Leaf Attachment:

- Description: No other tree on earth has a leaf like *Ginkgo biloba*. Fan-shaped with a dichotomous vein pattern, the leaves are usually 2-lobed (hence *biloba*) but, as seen in this image, the lobing can vary considerably.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: October 5, 2009
- Image File Name: ginkgo_5511.png



Leaf/Leaf Attachment:

- Description: The simple leaves of ginkgo are attached alternate on young stems or in small clusters of 3 to 5 arising out of the spurs.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: July 5, 2004
- Image File Name: ginkgo_6393.png



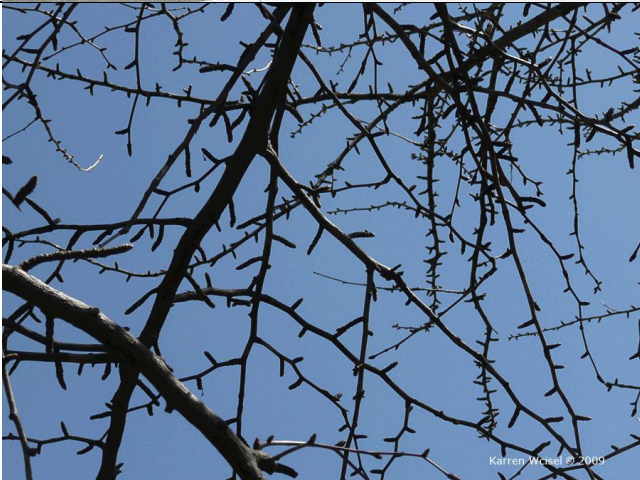
Leaf/Leaf Attachment:

- Description: Ginkgo is known for its outstanding fall color which is usually a clear, golden yellow. Frequently the leaves will fall all at once leaving the tree bare seemingly overnight!
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: October 19, 2009
- Image File Name: ginkgo_5923.png



Winter interest:

- Description: The bare branches are accentuated in new fallen snow.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: December 4, 2010
- Image File Name: ginkgo_2997c.png



Special ID feature(s):

- Description: The leaf, of course, is the easiest identification feature but with or without leaves, the large, distinctive spurs will serve as an ever present identification tool.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: April 16, 2009
- Image File Name: ginkgo_1120921.png