

# Ostrya virginiana (Eastern) Hop-hornbeam, Ironwood

Despite being one of the hardest of [native\\*](#) woods, Hop-hornbeam is undesirable in commercial forests. It provides interest as an ornamental though, with [fluted](#) trunk, exfoliating bark, and drooping clusters of sac-like pods that resemble the fruit of hops, hence its common name.

Tried and True  
Native Plant Selections  
for the Mid-Atlantic



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| Tree   | Tree, Flowers, Close-up of Fruit/Leaves, Bark  |
|--|--|
| Height: 25-50 feet   |   |
| Spread: 20-35 feet   |    |
| Bloom Color: Tan/brown (male), light green (female)  |    |
| Characteristics  |  |
| Small, graceful, <a href="#">deciduous</a> , understory tree with rounded top and long slender branches  |   |
| <a href="#">Alternate</a> , <a href="#">elliptic</a> to <a href="#">ovate</a> , doubly-serrate leaves  |  |
| Flowers—male (present through winter) and female (April to June)—appear as catkins on the same tree  |  |
| <a href="#">Strobilus</a> resembling hops: drooping cluster of papery, inflated <a href="#">bracts</a> , each containing an <a href="#">ovoid</a> <a href="#">nutlet</a> |  |
| Yellow or copper fall leaves may <a href="#">persist</a> into winter   |  |
| Gray-brown, twisting trunk with “muscle-like” features and narrow rectangular strips of exfoliating <a href="#">bark</a>   |  |
| Attributes   |  |
| Tolerates <a href="#">clay</a> , rocky, and dry soils and sun; intolerant of flooding and especially of salt   |  |
| No serious pests or diseases; <a href="#">deer</a> seldom severely damage  |  |
| Adaptable but slow-growing   |  |
| Attracts birds like downy woodpecker, purple finch   |  |
| Growing and Maintenance Tips   | Excellent Replacement for  |
| <a href="#">Soil Requirements</a> : Moist, well-drained  | <a href="#">Ailanthus altissima</a> - Tree of Heaven   |
| <a href="#">Light Requirements</a> : Partial Shade, Shade  |  |
| <a href="#">Water Requirements</a> : Dry, Moist  |  |
| Transplant as a balled or burlapped plant  |  |
| Use as an ornamental lawn or street tree, or in a woodland garden  | *It is native to DC and most counties in PA. In DE, it is rare in the Piedmont and absent in the Coastal Plain. In VA, it is common in the mountains, frequent in the Piedmont, and infrequent in the Coastal Plain. |
| <a href="#">Hardiness</a> : USDA Zones 3-9   |  |

developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria

Images by Elaine Mills, National Garden, U.S. Botanic Garden and Meadowlark Botanical Gardens  
and by Mary Free (bottom left), Arlington, VA



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