Snavely's GARDEN CORNER

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American Bittersweet

Celastrus scandens



American Bittersweet fruit
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 20 feet

Spread: 24 inches

Sunlight: ○

Hardiness Zone: 2a

Description:

A high quality vine for screening or garden detail, known for its very showy orange to red fruit in fall, and good fall color; requires both male and female plants to set fruit

Ornamental Features

American Bittersweet is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. It features an abundance of magnificent orange berries in mid fall. It has dark green deciduous foliage. The round leaves turn yellow in fall.



American Bittersweet fruit
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

American Bittersweet is a multi-stemmed deciduous woody vine with a twining and trailing habit of growth. 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 woody vine will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and can be pruned at anytime. It is a good choice for attracting butterflies to your yard, but is not particularly attractive to deer who tend to leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spreading

American Bittersweet is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Hedges/Screening
- General Garden Use

Planting & Growing

American Bittersweet will grow to be about 20 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 24 inches. As a climbing vine, it tends to be leggy near the base and should be underplanted with low-growing facer plants. It should be planted near a fence, trellis or other landscape structure where it can be trained to grow upwards on it, or allowed to trail off a retaining wall or slope. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 20 years. This is a dioecious species, meaning that individual plants are either male or female. Only the females will produce fruit, and a male variety of the same species is required nearby as a pollinator.

This woody vine should only be grown in full sunlight. It is very adaptable to both dry and moist locations, and should do just fine under average home landscape conditions. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for xeriscaping or the moisture-conserving landscape. It is not particular as to soil type or pH, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This species is native to parts of North America.