



Plant Profile: Katsura
Cercidiphyllum japonicum

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Family *Cercidiphyllaceae*

Cercidiphyllum japonicum

Sections 5, 6, 24, I, O, Broadway Lawn

Weeping Katura *Cercidiphyllum japonicum f. pendulum* 'Amazing Grace'

Sections 10, O, Broadway Lawn

The genus *Cercidiphyllum* contains two species of trees, both of which are known as Katsura trees. Of the two species, *C. japonicum* and *C. magnificum*, only the former, *C. japonicum*, is found on Cave Hill Cemetery grounds. Of the two species, *C. japonicum* can reach a height of over 148 feet, while the *C. magnificum* is smaller and more ornamental in appearance, and is rarely more than 30 feet in height. *C. japonicum* are native to Japan and eastern China, with no difference between the native trees in those two locations. The tree makes an excellent shade tree in Midwestern United States landscapes, and is hardy in zones 4 to 8.



Katsura leaves.

The *C. japonicum* most often has a multi-stemmed trunk. It is typically grown as an ornamental tree. The leaves are small and heart-shaped, 2 to 4 inches in length, elliptical to oval in shape, with finely serrated edges. They grow along a short stem, in evenly spaced pairs, opposite each other. In the spring, emerging leaves have reddish tinge, turning to a blue-green color as summer progresses. Fall colors are bright, and consist of a mix of yellow, pink and orange-red. In the fall, the leaves produce an odor reminiscent of burnt sugar. They resemble those of redbuds. The bark of the tree is light gray in color and flaky.

The genus is dioecious, with separate male and female trees. The trees produce small, inconspicuous flowers in the early spring, and wind-pollinate. Seeds form as small, 3/4-inch pods on female trees. Because it is a non-native tree, the Katsura does not contribute to the biodiversity of native wildlife as a food source.

The Katsura is sensitive to drought and requires deep, moist soil. In drought conditions the trees will shed their mature leaves, but will regrow them once water becomes

available. The roots of the Katsura tree are shallow. It grows well in an urban landscape, planted as a street tree.

Cultivars include:

Weeping Katsura Tree *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* 'Pendulum' which grows to 15 to 25 feet in height and 20-25 feet wide.

Morioka Weeping Katsura Tree *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* "Morioka Weeping" has more upright branches with large leaves.

Red Fox Katsura Tree *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* "Rot fuchs" which grows 30 feet high and 16 feet wide, with bronze-purple leaves in the spring, turning to a bronze-green in the summer. A specimen of the Red Fox Katsura may be found in Section 6.

<https://www.yourgardensanctuary.com/katsura-tree/>

<https://www.mortonarb.org/trees-plants/tree-plant-descriptions/katsura-tree>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cercidiphyllum>