

Leaves, Limbs, Needles & Boughs

by Fred D. Opperman

Cladrastis lutea (kla-dras'tis lu-te'a) — American Yellowwood.

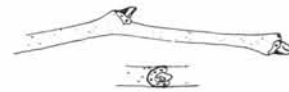
This tree gets its common name from the appearance of the freshly cut heartwood which is yellow. It is a very hardy tree and flowers far north. Yellowwood is an excellent tree for flowers and foliage, plus the medium size and spreading habit make it a choice shade tree for smaller areas.

Leaves: Alternate, odd-pinnately compound 7 to 9 (11) leaflets, entire leaf 8 to 12" long, elliptic to ovate, broad cuneate, glabrous, bright green, petiole enlarged at base.



Leaf color is opening bright yellowish green gradually changing to bright green in summer. Fall color is yellow to golden-yellow.

Bud: Terminal-absent, laterals-naked, superposed, the uppermost the largest and generally alone developing, flattened, closely packed together to form a pointed, bud-like, hairy "cone", nearly surrounded by the leaf scar.



Stem: Slender, more or less zigzag, smooth bright reddish brown, often bloomy, odor and taste resembling that of a raw dried pea or bean.

Bark: That of a beagle on the trail of a big old rabbit. No, no, wrong kind of bark. The bark is thin gray to light brown (beagles are that color too!), resembling the bark of beech, with slight protuberances of ridges and horizontal wrinkles.

Size: 30 to 50' in height with a spread of 40 to 50'.

Flowers: Perfect white, fragrant 1 to ¼" long; borne in 8 to 14" long pendulous terminal panicles or racemes in late May to early June. Tends to produce the greatest amount of flowers in alternate years or every third year, when in full flower the tree appears to be dripping with white rain.

Fruit: Has a pod, which is brown about 2½ to 4" long with 4 to 6 flat brown seeds.

Disease & Insects: Very few problems are associated with this tree.

Culture: Transplant in the fall or spring into well drained soil; tolerates high pH soils as well as acid conditions. Plant in full sun and prune only in the summer as the tree blends profusely if pruned in the winter or spring.

Credit: "Manual of Woody Landscape Plants" by Michael A. Dirr

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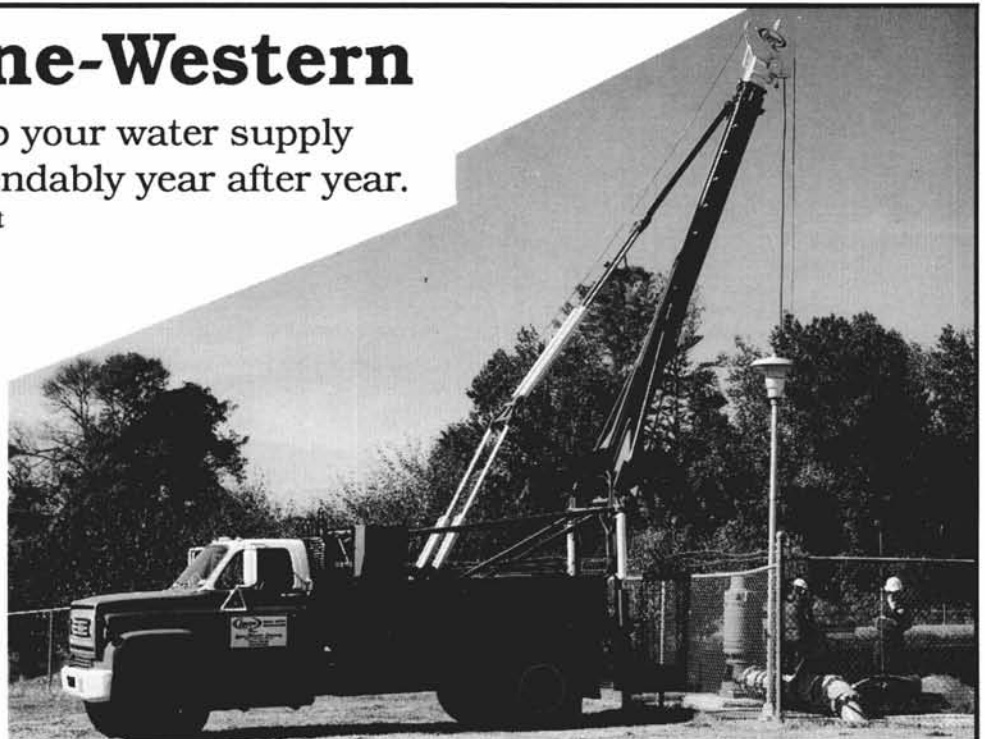
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708/897-6941