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Eastern Hophornbeam
Ostrya Virginiana

General

Eastern hophornbeam, also frequently called ironwood, is a small understory tree or shrub found throughout the eastern deciduous forests and as far west as the Black Hills in western South Dakota. A member of the birch family, it prefers moist, partly shaded, upland sites. It may sometimes reach heights of 50'. The wood is extremely tough and was formerly used for tool handles. The seed pods look similar to hops and are eaten by wildlife. The leaves frequently stay on the tree over the winter.

Light

This tree is an understory tree and does well both in bright and partially shaded locations.

Water

Hophornbeam thrive in moist understory forest locations. They should be watered regularly and misted from time to time.

Winter

Ironwood are winter hardy and can tolerate temperatures below zero when precautions are taken. They can be wintered outside on the ground in a shaded area out of the wind with the pot covered in mulch to the rim. They should be protected from gnawing animals. They can also be kept in an unheated garage or greenhouse. They can stay frozen for the whole winter without harm.

Fertilizer

A mild fertilizer of almost any kind will work well. A slow-release fertilizer like Osmocote, or Bio-gold works well.

Training

Ironwood can be trained like most deciduous species, using the clip-n-grow technique and wiring branches with aluminum wire when needed.

Repotting

Generally a newly collected tree takes about three years to re-establish its root system in it's new container. At this time there is usually a noticeable increase in vigor and this is a good sign that the tree is ready for repotting. The best time for this is in the spring, after all danger of freezing is past. At this time dead roots can be removed, excessively long roots can be trimmed and more of the remaining original soil can be washed off. The planting angle can be adjusted to fit the new container.

There may be good reasons to repot before three years; a tree may already be strong and vigorous, a pot may have cracked or other reasons. In this case it is usually better to just move the tree into it's new pot while trying to disturb the root system as little as possible. A newly repotted tree should always be protected from freezing.