

FEATURED TREE

Carpinus betulus

(Common or European Hornbeam)



Plan, manage, protect



Notes

A graceful tree that is an under utilised in Australian landscapes. The Hornbeam can develop a finely branched crown, which is densely foliated and forms a beautiful oval or vase shape in the landscape. Dense foliage turns attractive yellow in autumn.

The cultivar 'Fastigiata' is most often offered by nurseries.

Although tolerant of a range of soil types and extended dry periods, it prefers moist soils with good drainage to develop best specimens.

Good tree for urban landscapes. Useful species for screens and informal hedges.

Left: Maturing tree in Heide Museum of Modern Art, Bulleen.

Above: Hornbeam used as an effective hedge.

Origin	The natural range of Common Hornbeam extends across central Europe including south-east England and southern Sweden to Asia Minor.
Habit	Medium to large deciduous tree with a oval, narrow domed form with ascending branches. Branching can extend low to the ground. Crown develops on a fluted trunk often with pronounced buttress roots; surface orientated root system. A mature height of about 15-25m x 12-15m wide.
Description	Leaves are alternate, simple ovate to oblong, with double serrate margins, and pronounced venation. Lustrous green leaves turn golden yellow in autumn. White, cream catkins develop in spring followed by hop-like fruiting catkins. Finely fissured, dark grey bark. Generally slow to moderate growth rate.
Tolerances	Tolerates a wide range of soil conditions from sand to clay, as long as well drained. Grows in both acid and alkaline soil and is tolerant of drought, poor drainage, pollution, and urban conditions. May die back in severe drought in sites with limited soil space. But will grow well without irrigation in areas with open soil where roots can grow unrestricted. Prefers full sun but will grow in partial shade.

Root space	Based on a 45cm trunk diameter (DBH) the tree would require approximately 28m ³ root volume (Urban, 2008).
Availability	Occasional. 'Fastigiata' cultivar more commonly available.
Uses & management	<p>An uncommonly cultivated tree in Australia, well suited to urban landscapes. Good street and open space tree. Due to its branch architecture and dense foliage, the tree rarely requires pruning once established in the landscape.</p> <p>Cultivar known as <i>Carpinus betulus</i> 'Fastigiata' has more upright, compact and dense branching habit which lends itself superbly to creating hedges or screens. European hornbeam tolerates clipping extremely well and has been used as a screening plant for centuries. The cultivar is also suitable for sites where horizontal space is limited. Young trees will be quite narrow but they will broaden with age. No major pests or diseases. Advanced stock may be difficult to transplant.</p> <p>An extremely hard, heavy wood traditionally used for heavy beams and yokes.</p>



Above: Finely fissured grey bark.

Reference

Dirr, M. A. (2009) *Manual of woody landscape plants*. Stipes Publishing.
 L. L. C. Moore, D. and White, J. (2003) *Cassel's Trees of Britain & Northern Europe*.
 Cassell. Urban, J. (2008) *Up by roots*. International Society of Arboriculture.

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