

The Simpson's stopper is an attractive, multi-functional tree that attracts wildlife

“He that plants trees loves others beside himself.”

- Thomas Fuller

The motivation to garden may be different for each person. Some may want the serenity that comes from the feel of the soil in their hands, the sun on their face and the joy of seeing their efforts achieved. For others it may be a simple matter of having a nice looking yard. Still others may have a more practical approach and the goal is to produce shade or grow vegetables and fruit. For many, the desired achievement may be attracting wildlife. Some aspire to make a better earth and make the world a more beautiful and purified place. Whatever the motivation to garden may be, the Simpson's stopper (*Myrcianthes fragrans*) is a great choice to enhance any garden or landscape.

A member of the Myrtle family, the Simpson's stopper is native to Florida and the Caribbean. Considered a multi-functional tree, the stopper seems to have something to offer every gardener.

For those whose goal is to garden for the love of gardening, the Simpson's stopper is a tree that, once established, needs very little care which allows the gardener more time for other areas. They are multi-functional plants that can be used as background fillers, shade producers and wildlife attractors. The tree blooms regularly throughout the year and produces a beautiful fragrance. It can reach heights of 25 feet and yield flowers and fruit at the same time. Being an evergreen, the stopper does not make the mess that many other types of trees do.

As far as a landscaping plant, the stopper is tough to beat. These trees take trimming and shaping quite well. They can be encouraged to develop into a canopy tree or be kept short and tightly rounded. One of the many appealing attributes of the stopper is its tendency toward multi-stem branching. The tree is visually appealing with its very distinct, red, peeling bark, multiple branches, blooms and fruit. It is a great way to enhance the looks of any yard or landscape.

If the goal is practical and the gardener wishes to produce shade and food, the stopper is still a good choice. Although it is a fairly small tree, it does produce a shady, shadowy area when planted in the right place. The fruits that the tree produces are edible and have a sweet, citrus-like, piney taste. Tales about the tree's fruit and bark being used as a treatment for diarrhea are plentiful, thus the name, “stopper.” However, there is no known proof that the plant actually achieves these medicinal results.

Attracting butterflies and birds is one of the many benefits of planting the Simpson's stopper. They are dependable bloomers and the nectar and fruit the tree produces is a favorite of many species of wildlife. A multi-tasker, the stopper will fruit and flower at the same time, producing a veritable smorgasbord for many types of critters. Monarchs and other varieties of butterflies love the nectar that the flowers produce. Mockingbirds, cardinals and other types of birds enjoy the orange berries that the tree puts forth in the summer months. Other types of animals feast on the juicy fruits and all of these creatures find the comfort of shelter in its branches.

Simpson's stopper grows best in sun to partial shade. Along with the aromatic blooms, it has spicy fragrant leaves, which smell a little like eucalyptus. It is a very beautiful tree and although it is a slow grower, placed in the right place; it would be a wonderful addition to most any landscape or garden.

Several varieties of native trees along with shrubs, vines and flowering plants will be available at our Air Potato Exchange Day on January 9th. The Simpson's stopper is one of the many choices that will be offered. All plants for the program will be purchased from the Lord's Farm Nursery located in Lake Placid. The "exchange" event will take place at the Agriculture Center in Sebring. More details and workshops on the program will be forthcoming in the near future. If you want to know more, feel free to give us a call at (863) 402-6545 or check out our website – www.highlandsswcd.org.