

Paper Mulberry BRPA4
***Broussonetia papyrifera* (L.) L'Hér. ex Vent**

From: Miller, James H. and Steve T. Manning. [working title] An Expanded Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests: A Field Guide for Identification and Control. Asheville, NC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Research Station. DRAFT - August 2008

Family: Moraceae

Plant. Deciduous, large shrub or tree with a round crown to 50 feet (15 m) in height and boles to 2 feet (0.6 m) in diameter, often appearing as a shrub forming thickets from root sprouts. Broad oval leaves, sometimes deeply lobed on rapidly growing stems, softly hairy on the lower surface and scruffy above. Downy gray twigs with scattered prominent orange dots (lenticels) on older branches. Shallow rooted and prone to windthrow. Separate male and female plants.

Stem. Twigs moderately stout, zigzagging, dark to light gray, sometimes greenish to reddish brown, covered with silvery down with distinct orange dots (lenticels) when young. Oval leaf scars have protruding rims with stipular scars of light lines on both sides and a hairy, domed flower bud in winter. Branches smooth and mottled gray (green with algae at times) increasingly with protruding orange-tan lenticels, leaf and stipular scars. Pith white with woody diaphragms at nodes. Bark light gray, braided with orangish to light-tan stripes, becoming yellowish with age at the base.

Leaves. Alternate, sometimes opposite or whorled, oval to heart shaped, 3 to 10 inches (7.5 to 25 cm) long, sometimes with one to six deeply rounded sinuses. Dark green and sandpaperly above, whitish and velvety below. Margins finely serrate to sharply toothed except near the base. Petioles 2 to 5 inches (1.5 to 5 cm) long, light green, and hairy. Stipules quickly shed.

Flowers. April to May. Male and female flowers appear on separate plants. Clusters of tiny male flowers are elongate, woolly, and drooping, 2.5 to 3 inches (6 to 8 cm) long. Female flowers globular, 1 inch (2.5 cm) wide. Both pale green turning to purple.

Fruit and seeds. July to August on female plants. Globular and compound, orange turning reddish purple, 0.7 to 1 inches (1.8 to 2.5 cm) wide, with many embedded or protruding tiny, red seeds.

Ecology. Rapid growing, forming thickets and dense stands in fencerows, disturbed sites, and forest edges. Colonizes by root sprouts and spreads by prolific animal-dispersed seeds.

Resembles both the native red mulberry (*Morus rubra* L.) and the nonnative white mulberry (*M. alba* L.), which also have a mixture of entire to mitten-shaped leaves but are not velvety hairy beneath. Red mulberry fruit are red while white mulberry fruit are white.

History and use. Introduced in the mid 1700's from Japan and China as a rapidly growing shade tree. Used in ancient times by the Chinese to produce the first fibrous paper (thus the common name "paper").