Zelkova serrata is one of the two best large shade trees with a vase shape, a rapid growth rate, and stately appearance. Other ornamental features of Japanese Zelkova include summer/autumn foliage, fine texture, and attractive bark. It is a truly underutilized tree in modern landscapes.

**FEATURES**

**Form**
- large tree: 60’ tall x 60’ wide
- upright vase
- medium to fast growth rate

**Culture**
- full sun to partial sun
- prefers moist, well-drained, deep soils in full sun, but is very adaptable and urban tolerant (especially to heat, drought, pollution, poor soils, and soils of various pH)
- propagated by seeds, rooted stem cuttings, and grafting cultivars onto seedling rootstock
- no disease or pest problems of significance, including resistance to Dutch elm disease
- commonly available in B&B form
- may be the best replacement for the American Elm (Ulmus americana), in combining a vased habit (although it is not nearly as tall or arching as American Elm) with resistance to Dutch elm disease
- because of its dense canopy when young, Zelkova serrata should be periodically thinned to allow light flow into the interior canopy and to reduce the number of branches originating at the vase branch point

**Foliage**
- alternate, ovate, serrated to crenate
- short acuminate tip
- clean dark green throughout the summer
- very handsome
- mixture of yellow, golden, orange, and red
- very appealing

**Flowers**
- monoecious, ornamentally insignificant
- in Apr.

**Fruits**
- ornamentally insignificant drupes are hidden by the foliage; they ripen in Oct.

**Twigs**
- thin, fine-textured, reddish-brown to gray-brown, slightly pubescent, and zigzag, having buds that diverge at wide angles from the stems
- twigs and small branchlets usually grow within a single plane for an entire young branch, gradually becoming three-dimensional in their branching as the limb matures

**Trunk**
- shining medium gray to blue-gray with prominent horizontal lenticels, changing to a slightly exfoliating, mottled combination of gray, peach, and orange with maturity
- ornamental
- large ascending to vased branches originate within 3’ of each other, but less prone to splitting or shearing off during storms or in heavy loads of snow than other vase-shaped plants

**USAGE**

**Function**
- shade or specimen tree

**Texture**
- fine texture in foliage and when bare
- thick density in foliage and when bare

**Assets**
- graceful and stately vased growth habit above a straight basal trunk
- rapid growth and establishment
- excellent dark green and clean summer foliage
- excellent autumn color
- ornamental bark with age

**Liabilities**
- marginally hardy in severe zone 5 winters
- branching can become so thick after about 10-15 yrs. of rapid growth that some canopy thinning is necessary in youth

**Habitat**
- Zones 5 to 8
- Native to China

**SELECTIONS**

**Alternates**
- vase-shaped large shade trees (Ulmus americana 'Delaware #2', Ulmus parvifolia [in some cases]) or ornamental trees (Cornus kousa, Crataegus viridis 'Winter King', Prunus serrulata 'Kwanzan', etc.)
- shade trees with excellent autumn color (Acer rubrum, Acer saccharum, Fraxinus americana, Nyssa sylvatica, Ulmus parvifolia, etc.)
- trees with ornamental bark (Acer griseum, Acer pensylvanicum, Betula nigra, Carya ovata, Fagus sylvatica, Ulmus parvifolia, etc.)

**Cultivars - Variants - Related species**
- Zelkova serrata 'Green Vase' - a little more upright in habit; bronze-red autumn foliage
- Zelkova serrata 'Village Green' - rapid growth rate, wine-red autumn color, probably the best for ornamental traits and resistance to minor foliar cosmetic diseases or pests