**Albizia julibrissin**
Mimosa¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

**INTRODUCTION**

This fast-growing, deciduous tree has a low branching, open, spreading habit and delicate, lacy, almost fern-like foliage (Fig. 1). Fragrant, silky, pink puffy pompom blooms, two inches in diameter, appear in abundance from late April to early July creating a spectacular sight. But the tree produces numerous seed pods and harbors insect (webworm) and disease (vascular wilt) problems. Although rather short-lived (10 to 20 years), Mimosa is popular for use as a terrace or patio tree for its light, dappled shade and tropical effect. Its deciduous nature allows the warming sun to penetrate during the winter. There are too many other high-quality trees in this cruel world to warrant planting this tree.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** Albizia julibrissin  
**Pronunciation:** al-BIZ-zee-uh joo-lih-BRISS-in  
**Common name(s):** Mimosa, Silktree  
**Family:** Leguminosae  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 6B through 9 (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Uses:** near a deck or patio; reclamation plant; specimen  
**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet  
**Spread:** 25 to 35 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette  
**Crown shape:** spreading; vase shape  
**Crown density:** open  
**Growth rate:** fast  
**Texture:** fine

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** bipinnately compound; odd pinnately compound  
**Leaflet margin:** ciliate; entire  
**Leaflet shape:** lanceolate; oblong  
**Leaflet venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
**Leaflet blade length:** less than 2 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change

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**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** pink  
**Flower characteristics:** pleasant fragrance; showy; spring flowering; summer flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** elongated  
**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches  
**Fruit covering:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** brown  
**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree; showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure  
**Breakage:** susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break  
**Current year twig color:** gray  
**Current year twig thickness:** stout

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate  
**Soil salt tolerance:** good

**Other**

**Roots:** surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** No entries found.  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** not known to be susceptible
Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Growing best in full sun locations, Mimosa is not particular as to soil type but has low salt-tolerance. Grows well in acid or alkaline soil. Mimosa tolerates drought conditions well but has a deeper green color and more lush appearance when given adequate moisture. The litter problem of the blooms, leaves, and especially the long seed pods requires consideration when planting this tree. Also the wood is brittle and has a tendency to break during storms though usually the wood is not heavy enough to cause damage. Typically, most of the root system grows from only two or three large-diameter roots originating at the base of the trunk. These can raise walks and patios as they grow in diameter and makes for poor transplanting success as the tree grows larger.

Unfortunately, Mimosa (vascular) wilt is becoming a very widespread problem in many areas of the country and has killed many roadside trees. Despite its picturesque growth habit and its beauty when in bloom, some cities have passed ordinances outlawing further planting of this species due to its weed potential and wilt disease problem.

Several cultivars exist: ‘Alba’ has white flowers; ‘Rosea’ (‘Ernest Wilson’) has bright pink flowers, is hardier than the species, and is 10 to 15 feet in height; ‘Rubra’ has deep pink flowers. ‘Charlotte’, ‘Tyron’, and ‘Union’ are reportedly wilt resistant and may be coming into production in selected nurseries in some areas.

Mimosa readily germinates from its abundant seeds but the wilt resistant trees must be increased by root cuttings.

**Pests**

Problems include cottony cushion scale, mites, Mimosa webworm.

**Diseases**

Mimosa (Fusarium) wilt is quite a problem and is fatal. It can spread to adjacent Mimosa trees by root grafts.