**Bauhinia variegata ‘Candida’**
‘Candida’ Variegated Orchid-Tree

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**INTRODUCTION**

The fast-growing White Orchid-Tree grows 20 to 40 feet in height with a 20 to 30-foot-spread, the slender trunks topped with arching branches clothed in large, two-lobed, deciduous leaves (Fig. 1). In fall, before the leaves drop, white orchid-tree is festooned with many showy and delightfully fragrant, five-inch-wide, pure white, orchid-shaped blossoms. These flowers appear on the trees from January to April and are a beautiful sight to see. The flowers are followed by 12-inch-long, slender, brown, flat seedpods which usually persist on the tree throughout the winter. This spectacular display makes orchid-tree a favorite for specimen and street-tree plantings.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Scientific name: *Bauhinia variegata* ‘Candida’  
Pronunciation: bah-HIN-ee-uh vair-ee-eh-GAY-tuh  
Common name(s): ‘Candida’ Variegated Orchid-Tree  
Family: Leguminosae  
USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)  
Origin: not native to North America  
Uses: large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; reclamation plant; shade tree; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree  
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

**DESCRIPTION**

Height: 20 to 35 feet  
Spread: 20 to 30 feet  
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette  
Crown shape: vase shape  
Crown density: moderate  
Growth rate: fast  
Texture: medium  
Foliage  
Leaf arrangement: alternate  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: lobed; cleft  
Leaf shape: orbiculate  
Leaf venation: palmate
**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous; semievergreen

- **Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches
- **Leaf color:** green
- **Fall color:** no fall color change
- **Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

- **Flower color:** white
- **Flower characteristics:** spring flowering; very showy; winter flowering

**Fruit**

- **Fruit shape:** elongated; pod
- **Fruit length:** 12 inches or more
- **Fruit covering:** dry or hard
- **Fruit color:** black
- **Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree; showy

**Trunk and Branches**

- **Trunk/bark/branches:** 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; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; 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:** brown
- **Current year twig thickness:** medium; thin

**Culture**

- **Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
- **Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
- **Drought tolerance:** high
- **Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate
Bauhinia variegata ‘Candida’ -- ‘Candida’ Variegated Orchid-Tree

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: No entries found.
Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

White Orchid-Tree should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil. Trees are very drought-tolerant and actually flower best on dry soils. Problems include a tendency to show nutritional deficiencies, especially potassium; the weak wood which is susceptible to breakage in storms; the abundant seedlings which may germinate in the landscape; and the litter problem created by the falling leaves, flowers, and seedpods. Orchid-tree may need occasional pruning to develop a uniform shape when it is young. Branches tend to develop low on the trunk and droop toward the ground forming a large bush if left unpruned. Occasional pruning during the life of the tree will help maintain a nice, neat appearance.

Pests

Caterpillars, mites, borers.

Diseases

Leaf spot, leaf scorch, mushroom root rot diseases.