Cercis canadensis var. texensis
Texas Redbud¹

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INTRODUCTION

Texas Redbud is a deciduous tree, native to southwestern North America including Texas, which reaches 30 to 40 feet in height with a 15 to 20-foot width, and grows slowly into a rounded or vase shape (Fig. 1). It and the Mexican Redbud are the best suited Redbuds for the western and central Texas and Oklahoma areas of the country. Young trees are a bit irregularly-shaped and benefit from some training and pruning to form an upright, more uniform crown. The incredibly shiny, thick, leathery, dark green leaves have rounded or notched tips, are two to three inches wide, and turn yellow before dropping in the fall. The pink flowers appear in profusion up and down the tree limbs in springtime, well before the leaves begin to emerge. The four-inch-long seedpods which follow are a lovely purple color and remain on the tree well into the winter.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Cercis canadensis var. texensis
Pronunciation: SER-sis kan-uh-DEN-sis variety teck-SEN-sis
Common name(s): Texas Redbud
Family: Leguminosae
USDA hardness zones: 5 through 9A (Fig. 2)
Origin: native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; 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; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 25 to 30 feet
Spread: 15 to 25 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: round; vase shape
Crown density: moderate

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Growth rate: fast  
Texture: coarse

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: entire  
Leaf shape: orbiculate; ovate  
Leaf venation: banchidodrome; pinnate; palmate; reticulate  
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous  
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: yellow  
Fall characteristic: showy

Flower
Flower color: pink  
Flower characteristics: spring flowering; very showy

Fruit
Fruit shape: pod  
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches  
Fruit covering: dry or hard  
Fruit color: purple  
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; 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; 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
USE AND MANAGEMENT

The tree usually branches low on the trunk and if left intact forms a graceful multitrunked habit. Be sure to avoid weak forms by pruning to reduce the size of lateral branches. Keep them less than about half the diameter of the main trunk to increase the longevity of the tree. This will reduce branch splitting. The low branching habit makes Redbud ideal for use as a specimen, deck, or patio tree, and it is especially suited for planting on 15-foot-centers on both sides of an entry walk or long entrance driveway. Unfortunately, disease often shortens its life, but the tree puts on quite a show for a couple of decades and it is well worth the effort to have to replant at this time.

Texas Redbud should be grown in full sun or partial shade on moist, well-drained soil. It is highly drought tolerant once established and grows well in all areas within its hardiness range.

Pests

Treehoppers lay eggs under the bark of twigs. The insect itself is not seen but the white, sticky froth covering the eggs is quite noticeable. Control is usually not needed.

Scale insects can usually be controlled with horticultural sprays if needed.

Diseases

Canker is the biggest problem with Redbud. The fungus enters through wounds or dead and dying branches. Dieback begins as a canker on a branch. The cankers, at first small and sunken, enlarge to girdle the branch. Bark in the canker turns black and a crack forms between diseased and healthy bark. Once girdled, the part of the stem beyond the canker wilts and dies. There is no chemical control. Prune out diseased branches.

Leaf spots can be a problem during wet weather. Since the disease is rarely serious, no chemical controls are suggested.

Verticillium wilt attacks and kills Redbud. Fertilize affected trees and prune out wilted branches.

Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests