**Cercis mexicana**
Mexican Redbud

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**INTRODUCTION**

Mexican Redbud is a moderate to rapid-grower when young, reaching a height of 18 to 25 feet (Fig. 1). The splendid purple-pink flowers appear all over the tree in spring, just before the leaves emerge. Leaves are considerably smaller than those on Texas Redbud and Eastern Redbud, and the edges are distinctly undulating. Mexican Redbud has an irregular growth habit when young but forms a graceful flat-topped vase-shape as it gets older. The tree usually branches low on the trunk, and if left intact forms a graceful multi-trunked habit. It and Texas Redbud are the best suited Redbuds for western and central Texas and Oklahoma.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** Cercis mexicana

**Pronunciation:** SER-sis meck-sih-KAY-nuh

**Common name(s):** Mexican Redbud

**Family:** Leguminosae

**USDA hardiness zones:** 6B through 8 (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:** 18 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 18 to 25 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** round; vase shape

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** coarse
Cercis mexicana -- Mexican Redbud

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)
- **Leaf type:** simple
- **Leaf margin:** entire; undulate
- **Leaf shape:** cordate; orbiculate; ovate
- **Leaf venation:** palmate; reticulate
- **Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous
- **Leaf blade length:** 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:** brown
- **Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; 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

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
**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  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Be sure to avoid weak forks by pruning to reduce the size of lateral branches and save those which form a ‘U’-shaped crotch, not a ‘V’. Keep them less than half the diameter of the main trunk to increase longevity of the tree. Do not allow multiple trunks to grow with tight crotches, instead space branches about 6 to 10 inches apart along a main trunk. Yellow (although somewhat variable and unreliable) fall color and tolerance to partial shade make this a suitable, attractive tree for understory or specimen planting. Best not used extensively as a street tree due to low disease resistance and short life, but is nice in commercial and residential landscapes. Plant in a shrub border for a spring and fall color display.

Mexican Redbuds grow well in full sun in the northern part of its range but can benefit from some shade in the southern zones, particularly in the lower mid-west where summers are hot. Best growth occurs in a light, rich, moist soil but it adapts well to a variety of soil including sandy or alkaline. It grows well in its native habitat on limestones soils. Trees look better when they receive some irrigation in summer dry spells, especially if they are located in a restricted soil space. Trees are sold as single or multi-stemmed. Young trees are easiest to transplant and survive best when planted in the spring or fall. Containerized trees can be planted anytime. The beans provide food for some birds. Trees are often short-lived but provide a wonderful show in the spring and fall.

Cercis are best propagated by seed. Use ripe seed to plant directly, or, if seed has been stored, stratification is necessary before sowing in a greenhouse. Cultivars can be propagated by grafting onto seedlings, or by summer cuttings under mist or in a greenhouse.

**Pests**

- Borers attack the trunk of older and stressed Redbuds. Keep the plant vigorous.
- Scale insects can usually be controlled with horticultural sprays.
- Webworm can defoliate parts of the tree in summer and fall.

**Diseases**

- Canker is the biggest problem with Redbud. 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. The fungus enters through wounds or dead and dying branches. 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.