**Chorisia speciosa** ‘Monsa’  
‘Monsa’ Floss-Silk Tree

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

**INTRODUCTION**

This rounded, evergreen tree eventually has spreading branches which are green when young and without spines (Fig. 1). Young trees can have an upright of moderately vase form. The trunk is unusually thick and remains green even on older trees. Floss silk-tree can reach 50 feet in height with an equal or greater spread, and grows rapidly the first few years, then more slowly. The crown shape is more predictable than the species. The large, showy, pink and white, five-petaled flowers, which somewhat resemble narrow-petaled hibiscus, are produced in small clusters in fall and winter (usually October) when the tree is nearly bare. The fruits are large, eight-inch-long, pear-shaped, woody capsules, filled with silky, white, kapok-like floss and pea-like seeds. Floss from the seeds was used for stuffing pillows and thin strips of the bark have been used to make rope.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

- **Scientific name:** Chorisia speciosa ‘Monsa’
- **Pronunciation:** koe-RIZZ-ee-uh spee-see-OH-suh
- **Common name(s):** ‘Monsa’ Floss-Silk Tree
- **Family:** Bombacaceae
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)
- **Origin:** not native to North America
- **Uses:** recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; shade tree; specimen; residential street tree
- **Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

**DESCRIPTION**

- **Height:** 35 to 50 feet
- **Spread:** 40 to 55 feet
- **Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette
- **Crown shape:** vase shape
- **Crown density:** moderate
- **Growth rate:** fast
- **Texture:** coarse

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)
- **Leaf type:** palmately compound
- **Leaflet margin:** serrate
- **Leaflet shape:** elliptic (oval)
- **Leaflet venation:** pinnate
- **Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- **Leaflet blade length:** 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

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1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-164, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** pink  
**Flower characteristics:** fall flowering; very showy; winter flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** oval; round  
**Fruit length:** 6 to 12 inches  
**Fruit covering:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** brown; white  
**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; grow mostly upright and will not droop; should be grown with a single leader; very showy trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure  
**Breakage:** resistant  
**Current year twig color:** green  
**Current year twig thickness:** medium

**Culture**

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

**Other**

**Roots:** surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing  
**Winter interest:** tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
**Outstanding tree:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time  
**Pest resistance:** no pests are normally seen on the tree
Figure 3. Foliage of ‘Monsa’ Floss-Silk Tree.

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

An excellent specimen tree for parks, parking lots, and other large landscapes, Floss-Silk tree is spectacular when in bloom, producing an outstanding show of color in the fall. Large roots often form at the base of the trunk just beneath the soil, so be careful not to plant the tree too close to sidewalks or pavement. Ten feet from curbs, driveways and sidewalks should be adequate.

Prune the tree to be sure that only one central trunk develops when the tree is young. The central leader becomes less vigorous in middle age, allowing lateral limbs to develop into the main structure of the tree producing a spreading form. Although most branches are horizontal and well-attached to the tree, upright branches can develop with embedded bark which can cause a branch to split from the trunk. Prevent this by pruning the major limbs so they remain less than half the diameter of the trunk.

Flowering best in full sun, floss Silk-tree will thrive on any reasonably fertile soil with good drainage. It is not salt tolerant but does tolerate high pH. Grafted trees are preferred as they bloom earlier and at a smaller size.

Two grafted selections are available: ‘Los Angeles Beautiful’ has wine red flowers; and ‘Majestic Beauty’ has rich pink flowers.

Propagation is by seed or grafting.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.