



Albizia julibrissin Mimosa¹

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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, Silk tree

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

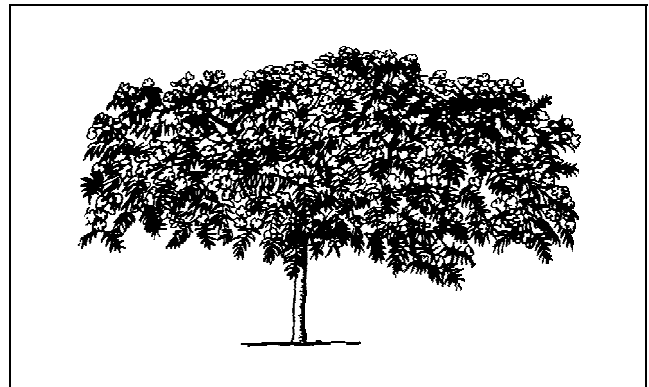


Figure 1. Mature Mimosa.

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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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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



Figure 3. Foliage of Mimosa.

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.