



Cassia fistula Golden-Shower¹

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INTRODUCTION

Golden-Shower is a fast-growing tree which reaches 30 to 40 feet in height and 30 to 40 feet wide (Fig. 1). The well-spaced branches are clothed with pinnately compound leaves, with leaflets up to eight inches long and 2.5 inches wide. These leaves will drop from the tree for a short period of time and are quickly replaced by new leaves. In summer, Golden-Shower is decorated with thick clusters of showy yellow blooms which cover the slightly drooping branches. The blooms are followed by the production of two-foot-long, dark brown, cylindrical seedpods which persist on the tree throughout the winter before falling to litter the ground. The seeds contained within are poisonous.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Cassia fistula*

Pronunciation: KASS-ee-uh FIST-yoo-luh

Common name(s): Golden-Shower

Family: *Leguminosae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10B 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); shade tree; specimen; residential street tree

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

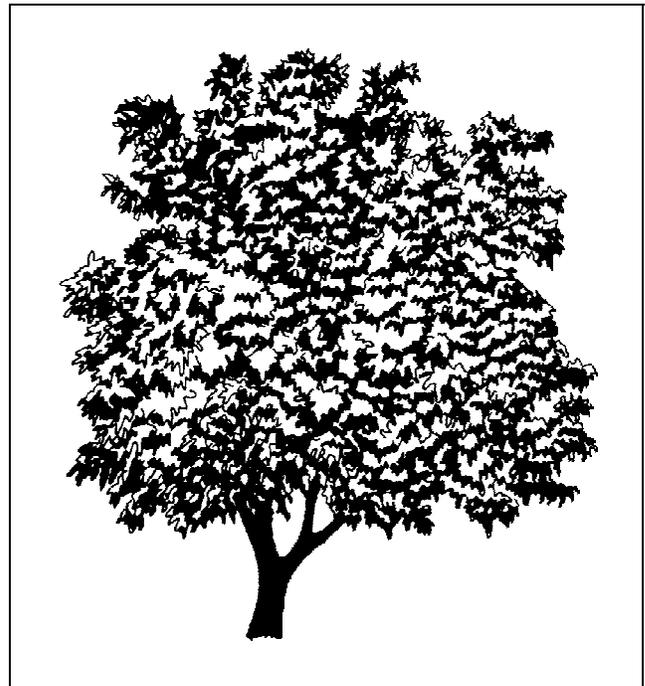


Figure 1. Middle-aged Golden-Shower.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 30 to 40 feet

Spread: 30 to 40 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: oval; upright; vase shape

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: even pinnately compound

Leaflet margin: entire; undulate

Leaflet shape: elliptic (oval)

Leaflet venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaflet blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristics: summer flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; pod

Fruit length: 12 inches or more

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: purple

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: moderate

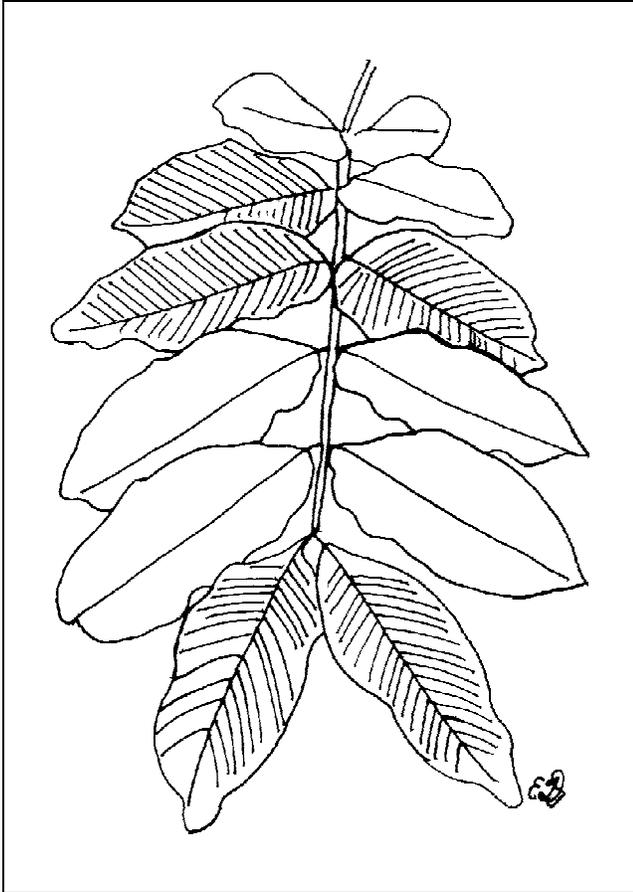


Figure 3. Foliage of Golden-Shower.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

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

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Golden-Shower is ideal for use as a specimen planting. It can look a bit coarse and unkempt for short periods when the leaves drop but the vibrant flower display more than makes up for this. Some communities have planted this as a street tree where it has held up quite well.

Golden-Shower should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil. The trees are moderately drought- and salt-tolerant. Although Golden-Shower is damaged by temperatures falling slightly below freezing, it will come back with warmer weather. Trees will need occasionally pruning when they are young to control shape and develop a uniform crown.

Young trees can grow asymmetrical with branches often drooping toward the ground. Staking and proper pruning will help develop a well shaped and structured crown.

Propagation is by seeds (which are poisonous).

Pests

No pests are of major concern but occasionally bothered by caterpillars.

Diseases

Mildew, leaf spot, root rot diseases.