



Chorisia speciosa 'Monsa' 'Monsa' Floss-Silk Tree¹

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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

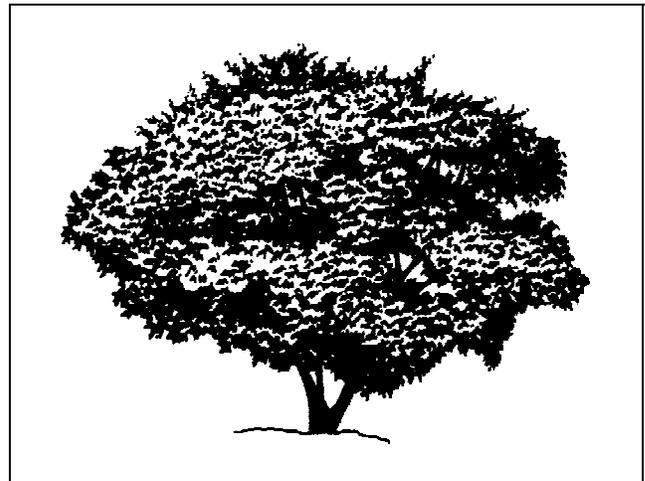


Figure 1. Mature 'Monsa' Floss-Silk Tree.

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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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

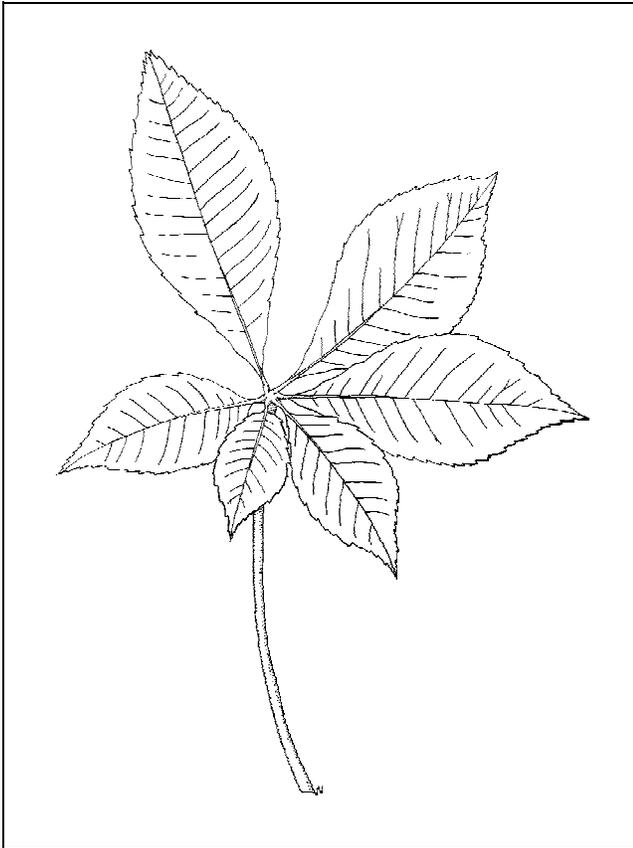


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Monza' Floss-Silk Tree.

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.

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