



Senna spectabilis Cassia¹

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INTRODUCTION

Cassia is a medium to large tree from tropical America and reaches 60 feet in height, but is often much smaller (Fig. 1). The pinnately compound leaflets have fuzzy undersides and are three inches long. The bright yellow flowers are 1.5 inches wide but appear in dense racemes up to two feet long. The cylindrical seedpods which follow are 12 inches long.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Senna spectabilis*

Pronunciation: SEN-uh speck-TAB-ih-liss

Common name(s): Cassia

Family: *Leguminosae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not 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; trainable as a standard; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

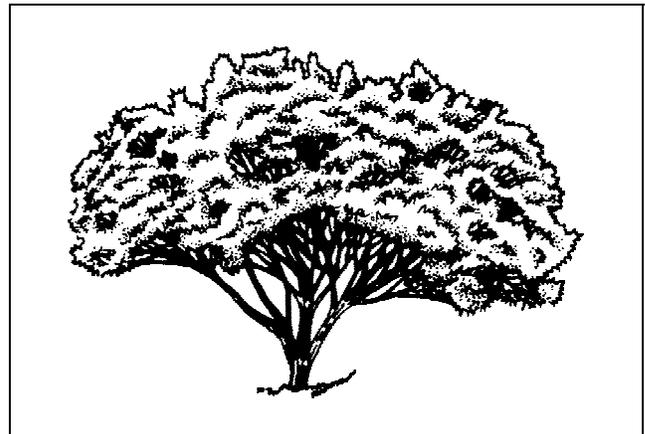


Figure 1. Middle-aged Cassia.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 20 feet

Spread: 15 to 20 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: round; vase shape

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: odd pinnately compound

Leaflet margin: entire

Leaflet shape: oblong; obovate

Leaflet venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaflet blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristics: fall flowering; summer flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; pod

Fruit length: 6 to 12 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree

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: green

Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: low

Soil salt tolerance: poor

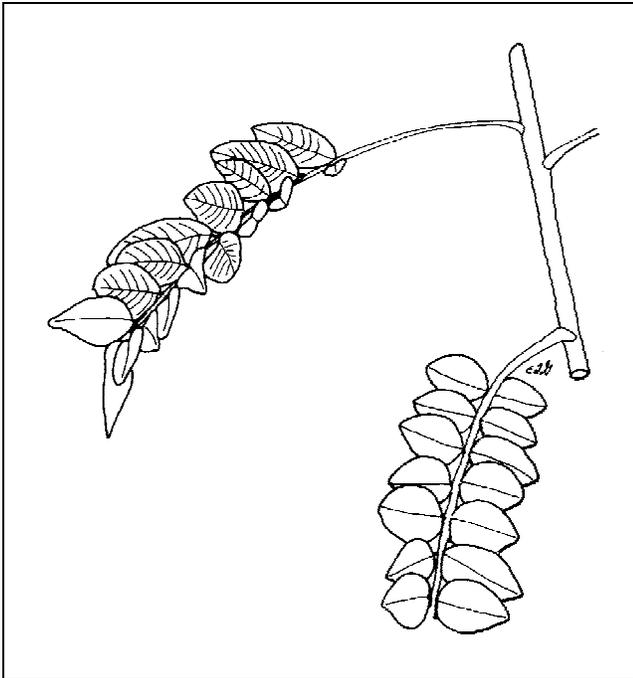


Figure 3. Foliage of Cassia.

Cassia should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil. It appears to adapt to alkaline soil.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases of major concern.

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

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

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

This tree is best used in an open, sunny, park-like setting where the bright flowers can be displayed and enjoyed. This will form a large mass of delicate foliage covered with yellow flowers for about two months each year. Lower branches often reach to the ground as they droop under the weight of the flowers. These branches can be removed to create clearance beneath the tree for pedestrians and vehicles. This would make the tree suited for planting along streets provided major branches were developed with good attachments to the trunk. Unpruned trees branch poorly, and large-diameter limbs often develop forming a coarse-textured branching structure. Regular heading back lateral branches as they develop from the trunk on small trees helps to create more branching and a more uniformly shaped crown. Occasional pruning during the life of the tree will help maintain this regular shape.