



# *Sophora japonica* 'Pendula' Weeping Scholar Tree<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

Weeping Pagoda Tree will grow to a height and spread of about 20 feet, forming a fine-textured, weeping round canopy even as a young tree (Fig. 1). It has a rapid growth rate and tolerates polluted city conditions, heat, and drought. The tree prefers a sunny, open location on any light soil. The very showy, greenish-white to yellow flowers produced by the species in mid to late summer are mostly absent from this cultivar. The young green twigs turn a dark grey with age.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Sophora japonica* 'Pendula'

**Pronunciation:** sah-FOR-uh juh-PAWN-ih-kuh

**Common name(s):** Weeping Scholar Tree, Weeping Japanese Pagoda Tree

**Family:** *Leguminosae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5 through 8A (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** 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; shade tree; residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

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

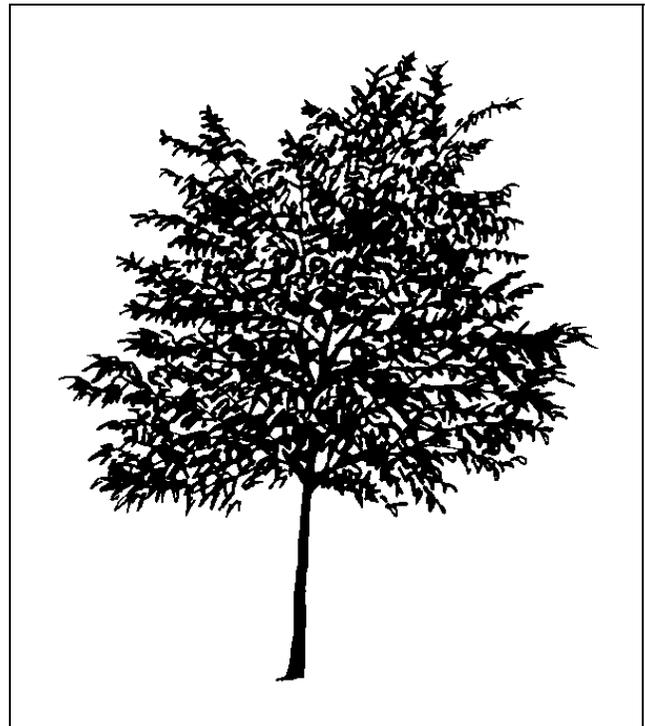


Figure 1. Young Weeping Scholar Tree.

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 15 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 12 to 20 feet

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

**Crown shape:** weeping

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** medium

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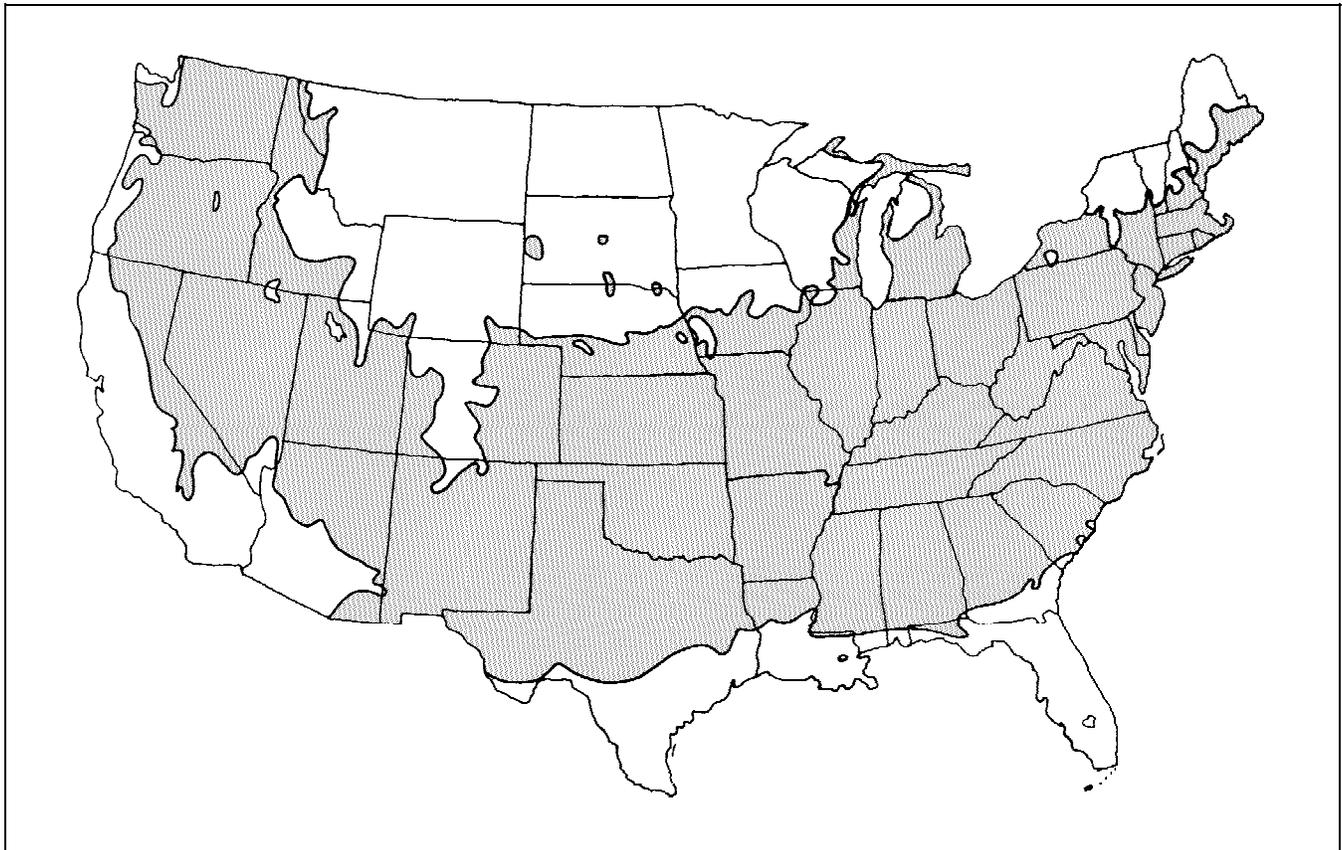


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Texture:** fine

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** odd pinnately compound

**Leaflet margin:** entire

**Leaflet shape:** ovate

**Leaflet venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaflet blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** yellow

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white; yellow

**Flower characteristics:** showy; summer flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** elongated; pod

**Fruit length:** 6 to 12 inches; 3 to 6 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown; yellow

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree; showy

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** 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:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium; thin

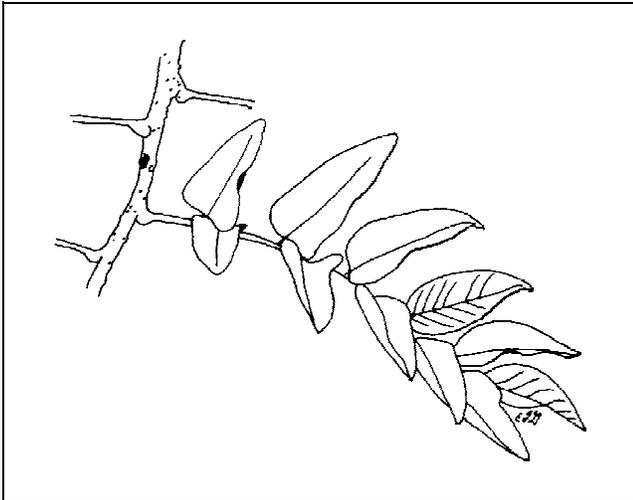
### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun

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

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate



**Figure 3.** Foliage of Weeping Scholar Tree.

### 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:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

The dropping flowers and fruit on the species which are considered a messy nuisance by some people are not a problem for this cultivar. These attributes could make this a superior tree for certain sites. The leaflets are small, creating light shade beneath the tree and are mostly washed away with rain or fall into shrub beds or between the grass blades.

Some trees come from the nursery with multiple trunks or branches clustered together at one spot on the trunk. Buy those with one central trunk growing up the center of the tree or prune the tree to a central leader to create a strong, durable structure. Space branches along the central leader to ensure good branch attachment. It may take several prunings to train the tree to the proper form.

This urban-tough tree is highly recommended for urban planting. Also makes a nice medium-sized patio tree and is well-suited for parking lot planting, creating shade from its spreading canopy. Adapted to restricted soil spaces, tolerates salt spray, and tolerates drought in reasonable soil but not wet soil. Best when planted in full sun.

Many tree cultivars must be grafted or propagated from cuttings. This one reproduces fairly consistently from seed.

*Sophora* species has a few cultivars: 'Fastigiata' - upright habit; 'Pendula' - weeping habit; 'Princeton Upright' - upright form suitable for narrow sites, somewhat smaller than the species; 'Regent' - oval crown and blooms at an early age, has glossy leaves which shed soot and dirt, readily available in nurseries.

### Pests

Potato leafhopper kills young stems causing profuse branching or witches broom on small branches. It usually is not a problem on larger trees.

### Diseases

*Sophora* species is generally pest- and disease-free.

Occasionally, Scholar Tree will get a fungus canker about two-inches or less across, have raised reddish brown margins and light brown centers. The infected stem is killed when the fungus girdles the stem. Another fungus is sometimes found on dead branches on *Sophora* species. Frost injury may give both fungi an entrance into the tree. Prune out dead, damaged, or diseased branches.

Twig blight or dieback can be a problem occasionally. Prune out infected branches and avoid unnecessary wounding. Keep trees vigorous by regular fertilization.

Powdery mildew forms a fungus mat which looks like a white coating on the leaves. The disease is usually not serious.