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IFAS EXTENSION

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Cassia javanica

Apple Blossom Tree, Pink and White Shower Tree

Fabaceae

Flower Display: A+



Fort Myers, Florida

Early June

During the dry season, *C. javanica* becomes adorned in pink, creating one of the most spectacular effects in the plant world. Drooping stems, some more than 20 feet long, are covered by masses of large pink flowers. They flow gracefully downward to sweep the ground and to cloak the spectator. *C. javanica* develops a broad, flat-topped, arching crown; which is perfect for shade, but is not too dense so as to exclude a well-kept lawn. Year after year, neighborhood trees will flower in precise order. Tree-A will always flower before tree-B; tree B before tree C, and so on. I like *C. javanica* for its long blooming period and unusual apple-like, slightly fragrant blossoms. It does have some distinct negatives, including

brittle branches, so it is not tolerant of strong winds. It also requires full sun for its powerful flower display, and sufficient room to develop its broad canopy. Some leaf loss usually occurs before, during, or after flowering but is not long lasting. *C. javanica* responds well to pruning which, when necessary, is best done after flowering. Long cylindrical pods form during flowering. They change color from green to black and hang on the tree for many months, though not in large numbers. Propagation is by seeds though some trees are sterile or perhaps self-sterile.



Fort Myers, Florida

Early May

Cassia Javanica

Incorrect: *C. agnes*

Origin: Indonesia

Zone: 9b—12b, 25°F

Growth Rate: Fast

Flowering Month(s): April —September

Flowering Days: 46

Leaf Persistence: Briefly Deciduous

Messiness: Medium when flowering

Salt Tolerance: Medium

Drought Tolerance: Medium

Nutritional Requirements: Medium

Typical Dimension: 40' x50'

Uses: Garden, Park, Shade, Specimen



Fort Myers, Florida

Late April



Fort Myers, Florida

Late August

Leaves: Even-pinnate, alternate, up to 27 inches long with 5 to 17 pairs of opposite, glossy, elliptic to oblong-elliptic leaflets. Young leaves are densely downy

Flowers: Pink fades to pale pink. Slightly fragrant. Ten unequal, yellow stamens. Arranged on stiff raceme to 7 inches long

Fruits: Pods, cylindrical, narrow, to 25 inches long

Tropical Flowering Trees List

Questions/Comments:

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Cassia javanica, Pink and White Shower¹



Michael G. Andreu, Melissa H. Friedman, and Robert J. Northrop²

Family

Fabaceae or Leguminosae, bean family

Genus

Cassia comes from the ancient Hebrew word “quetsi’oth,” first used by Dioscorides, a physician in Ancient Greece (40–90 AD). Linnaeus, also known as the father of taxonomy, was the first to use *Cassia* to signify members of this genus.

Species

The species name *javanica* is the Latin term for Java, where this plant was originally described.

Common Name

Pink and white shower, apple blossom cassia

This tree is referred to as “pink and white shower” because it produces pink and white blooms. It is also called “apple blossom cassia” because its dainty pink and white flowers may be easily confused with those of apple trees.



Figure 1. Clustering flowers of *Cassia javanica* (Pink and White Shower).

Credit: Jan Smith, [CC BY 2.0](#), <http://flic.kr/p/7qjwsN>

[Click thumbnail to enlarge.]

Description

This deciduous tree is native to Southeast Asia and Indonesia. It grows well in tropical regions of the United States such as Florida, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico, as long as it is in well-drained soil with little threat of freezing temperatures. This tree should be grown in direct sunlight for full flowering potential. With proper pruning, pink and white shower can reach heights of 35–45 feet. The leaves are alternately arranged and are pinnately compound. Each leaflet is oval-shaped, 4–5 inches long, and arranged in 5–12 pairs on a leaf. New woody stems are brown and the mature bark is light gray with thick vertical sections of dark brown. Small flowers appear at the end of branches in the summer months, and these blooms display different shades of pink and white on the same tree and on the same flower. Fruits are foot-long dry pods.

Allergen

Members of the genus *Cassia* are moderately allergenic. Oil from the pods may cause skin irritation to some individuals.

Storm Tolerance

Because of its droopy limbs and tendency not to form a strong, single-leader trunk, the pink and white shower tree is not strongly resistant to wind. However, adequate pruning can help to increase its storm tolerance.

Applications

Horticultural

Cassia javanica is planted primarily as a decorative shade tree. While not as popular as the yellow flowering *Cassia fistula* or golden shower (<http://youtu.be/ZdJ5e70Q8mw>), many people consider pink and white shower to be aesthetically pleasing because of its pink and white blooms that emerge during the summer months. Although pink and white shower is deciduous, it quickly replaces its leaves. Because its leafless season is so short, many find that pink and white shower is still a desirable shade tree throughout the year. Its rapid growth rate makes it an ideal tree for homeowners looking to increase their tree cover. Additionally, pink and white shower's natural resistance to pests increases its desirability as a landscape tree that is commonly used as an ornamental street tree.

Additional References

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Footnotes

1. This document is FOR296, one of a series of the School of Forest Resources and Conservation Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date July 2012. Reviewed October 2015. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Michael G. Andreu, associate professor; Melissa H. Friedman, research scientist; School of Forest Resources and Conservation; and Robert J. Northrop, Extension forester, UF/IFAS Extension Hillsborough County; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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