

# *Chorisia speciosa* ‘Los Angeles Beautiful’: ‘Los Angeles Beautiful’ Floss-Silk Tree<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This rounded, deciduous tree eventually has wide-spreading branches which are green when young and covered with spines, often becoming grey and sometimes losing their coarse, sharp spines. Young trees can have a columnar or upright form. The spiny 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. Some trees maintain a relatively narrow crown with one straight trunk while others are wide-spreading, particularly on older specimens. The large, showy, wine red 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*

**Pronunciation:** koe-RIZZ-ee-uh spee-see-OH-suh

**Common name(s):** ‘Los Angeles Beautiful’ Floss-Silk Tree

**Family:** *Bombacaceae*

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

**Origin:** not native to North America



Figure 1. Mature *Chorisia speciosa* ‘Los Angeles Beautiful’: ‘Los Angeles Beautiful’ Floss-Silk Tree

**Invasive potential:** has been evaluated using the IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida’s Natural Areas (Fox et al. 2005). This species is not documented in any undisturbed natural areas in Florida. Thus, it is not considered a problem species and may be used in Florida.

**Uses:** shade; specimen; street without sidewalk; highway median

**Availability:** not native to North America

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Figure 2. Range

## Description

**Height:** 35 to 50 feet

**Spread:** 40 to 55 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular

**Crown shape:** upright/erect, round, pyramidal

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** coarse

## Foliage

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

**Leaf type:** palmately compound

**Leaf margin:** serrate

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** red

**Flower characteristics:** very showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval, round

**Fruit length:** 6 to 12 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown, white/gray

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches don't droop; very showy; typically one trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun

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

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** low

## Other

**Roots:** can form large surface roots

**Winter interest:** yes

**Outstanding tree:** yes

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown

**Pest resistance:** free of serious pests and diseases

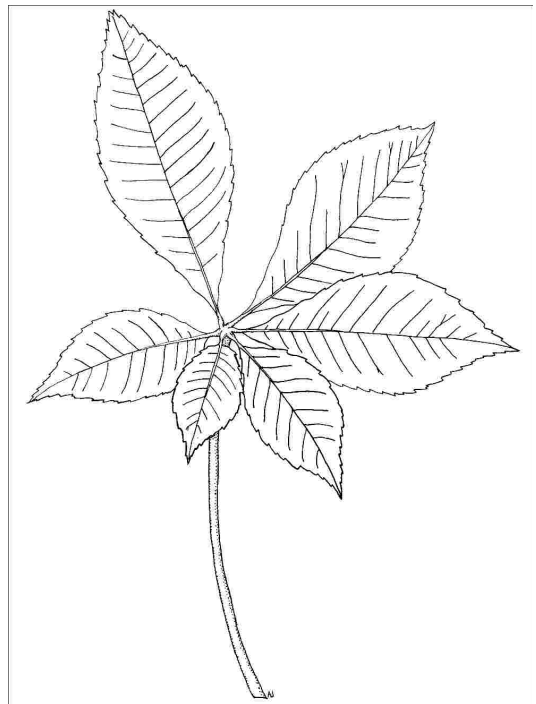


Figure 3. Foliage

## 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. Fifteen 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 pH. Grafted trees are preferred as they bloom earlier and at a smaller size.

'Majestic Beauty' is another grafted cultivar with rich pink flowers. The cultivar 'Monza' has a thornless trunk and pink fall flowers.

Propagation is by grafting.

## **Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

## **Literature Cited**

Fox, A.M., D.R. Gordon, J.A. Dusky, L. Tyson, and R.K. Stocker (2005) IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas. Cited from the Internet (November 3, 2006), <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment.html>