

# *Crescentia cujete*: Calabash-Tree<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Calabash is an evergreen tree reaching 20 to 30 feet in height with a broad, irregular crown composed of long, spreading branches clothed in two to six-inch-long bright green leaves, which create moderate shade beneath the tree. Calabash is most outstanding in the landscape for its year-round production of flowers and fruit, both of which are unusual. The two-inch-wide flowers are yellow/green with red or purple veins, cup-shaped, and appear to emerge directly from the branches. These are followed by the emergence of the large, round fruit, 5 to 12 inches in diameter, with a smooth, hard shell, which hang directly beneath the branches. Fruits are poisonous.

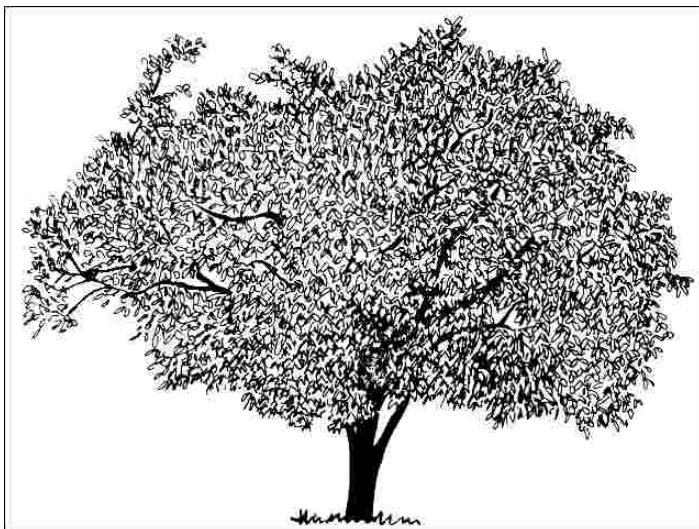


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Crescentia cujete*: Calabash-Tree

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Crescentia cujete*

**Pronunciation:** kress-EN-tee-uh koo-JEE-tee

**Common name(s):** Calabash-Tree

**Family:** *Bignoniaceae*

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential

**Uses:** specimen; deck or patio; street without sidewalk; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; highway median

**Availability:** not native to North America

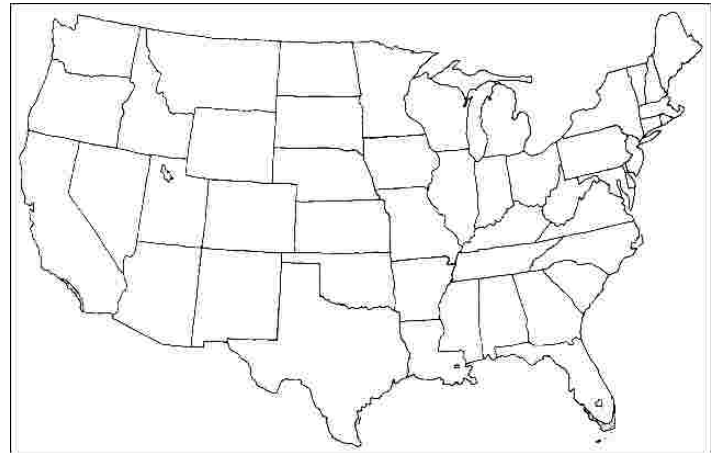


Figure 2. Range

## Description

**Height:** 20 to 30 feet

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.

**Spread:** 25 to 30 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular  
**Crown shape:** spreading, round  
**Crown density:** open  
**Growth rate:** moderate  
**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** obovate  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**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:** yellow, green  
**Flower characteristics:** showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round, oval  
**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** green  
**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure  
**Breakage:** resistant  
**Current year twig color:** unknown  
**Current year twig thickness:** medium, thick  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no  
**Outstanding tree:** yes  
**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown  
**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

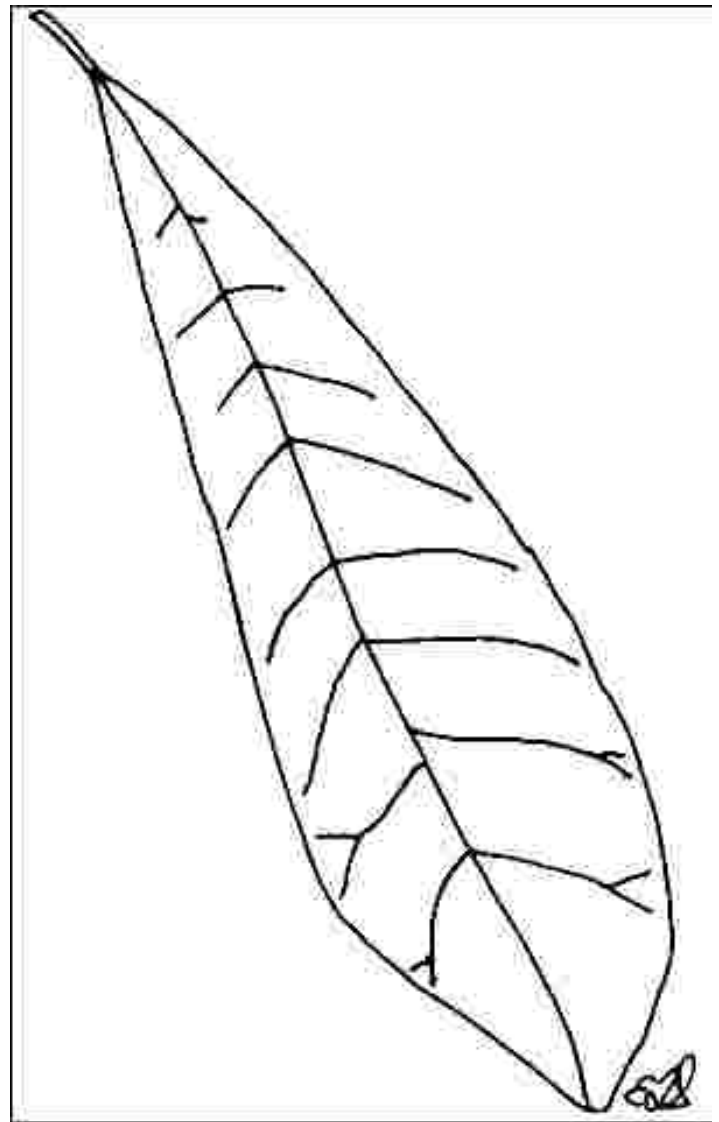


Figure 3. Foliage

## Use and Management

Calabash tree should be grown in full sun on any well-drained soil.

The main limbs on Calabash originate close to the ground forming a low-branched tree without training or pruning. These limbs branch infrequently, forming a heavy, awkward-looking canopy. This is suitable for planting in an open area where there is plenty of space. Prune the tips of the branches regularly when the tree is young to develop more secondary branches close to the trunk. This will help increase the diameter of the main branches and thicken the canopy. The trunk can be trained straight by staking, and lateral branches directed to grow upright.

Propagation is by seed.

## **Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern but occasionally bothered by Chinese rose beetles and a leaf-webbing caterpillar.