**Leucaena retusa: Goldenball Leadtree**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

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**Introduction**

Goldenball Leadtree is a native North American evergreen tree which reaches 25 feet in height and has blue/green to bright green foliage. The showy, yellow to white, rounded blooms appear from April to October and are especially prominent after a heavy rain. The attractive fruits which follow ripen in late summer.

![Figure 1. Middle-aged *Leucaena retusa*: Goldenball Leadtree](image1)

**General Information**

- **Scientific name:** *Leucaena retusa*
- **Pronunciation:** loo-KAY-nuh ree-TOO-suh
- **Common name(s):** Goldenball Leadtree, Littleleaf Leucaena, Littleleaf Leadtree
- **Family:** Leguminosae
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 7A through 9B (Fig. 2)
- **Origin:** native to North America
- **Invasive potential:** weedy native
- **Uses:** deck or patio; specimen; highway median; Bonsai
- **Availability:** not native to North America

![Figure 2. Range](image2)

**Description**

- **Height:** 20 to 25 feet
- **Spread:** 15 to 25 feet
- **Crown uniformity:** irregular
Leucaena retusa: Goldenball Leadtree

**Foliage**
- **Leaf arrangement**: alternate (Fig. 3)
- **Leaf type**: bipinnately compound
- **Leaf margin**: entire
- **Leaf shape**: oblong, elliptic (oval)
- **Leaf venation**: pinnate
- **Leaf type and persistence**: evergreen
- **Leaf blade length**: less than 2 inches
- **Leaf color**: green
- **Fall color**: no color change
- **Fall characteristic**: not showy

**Flower**
- **Flower color**: yellow
- **Flower characteristics**: very showy

**Fruit**
- **Fruit shape**: pod or pod-like, elongated
- **Fruit length**: 1 to 3 inches, 3 to 6 inches
- **Fruit covering**: dry or hard
- **Fruit color**: brown
- **Fruit characteristics**: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**
- **Trunk/bark/branches**: branches droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
- **Pruning requirement**: needed for strong structure
- **Breakage**: susceptible to breakage
- **Current year twig color**: brown
- **Current year twig thickness**: thin
- **Wood specific gravity**: unknown

**Culture**
- **Light requirement**: full sun
- **Soil tolerances**: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained
- **Drought tolerance**: high
- **Aerosol salt tolerance**: unknown

**Other**
- **Roots**: not a problem
- **Winter interest**: no
- **Outstanding tree**: yes

**Ozone sensitivity**: unknown
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility**: unknown
**Pest resistance**: unknown

**Use and Management**

The crown can develop a one-sided or asymmetrical habit when it is young, so pruning and training may be needed to form a more uniformly shaped crown. The drooping habit of the branches makes it difficult to maintain near a street, but it would make a nice accent tree for the shrub border or backyard garden. The tree tends to seed itself into the surrounding landscape and spreads rapidly. Some consider it a weed, and the wood is brittle.

Goldenball Leadtree should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil and will tolerate alkaline conditions very well. Care must be taken in the placement of this tree in the landscape since the wood is susceptible to breakage in wind- and ice-storms. Plant it in a spot protected from the wind.

Propagation is by seed.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.