

Tibouchina urvilleana: Princess-Flower¹

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Introduction

This sprawling, evergreen shrub or small ornamental tree ranges from 10 to 15 feet (20 feet with proper training) in height. It can be trimmed to any size and still put on a vivid, year-long flower display. The dark green, velvety, four to six-inch-long leaves have several prominent longitudinal veins instead of the usual one, and are often edged in red. Large, royal purple blossoms, flaring open to five inches, are held on terminal panicles above the foliage, creating a spectacular sight when in full bloom. Some flowers are open throughout the year but they are especially plentiful from May to January. Princess-Flower is ideal for the mixed shrubbery border or used in small groupings to compound the impact of bloom-time.

General Information

Scientific name: *Tibouchina urvilleana*

Pronunciation: tib-oo-KYE-nuh er-vill-ee-AY-nuh

Common name(s): Princess-Flower

Family: *Melastomataceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

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.

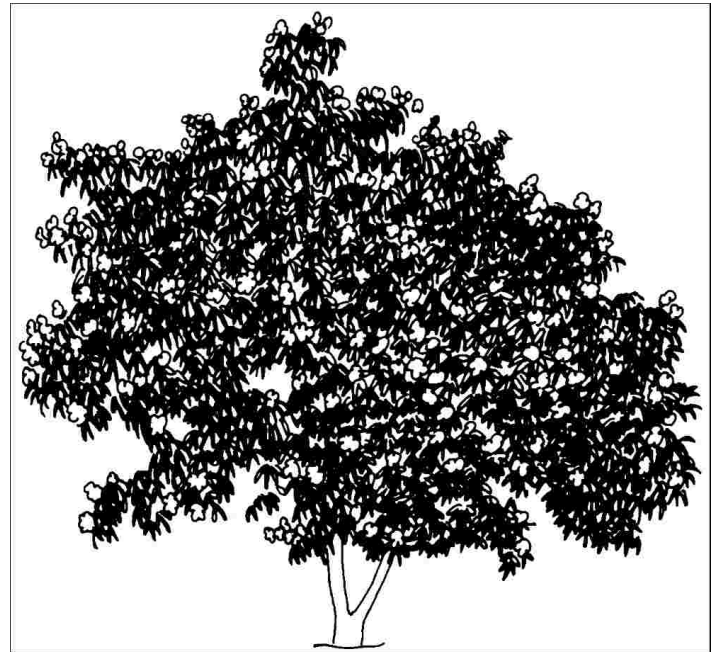


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Tibouchina urvilleana*: Princess-Flower

Uses: hedge; deck or patio; screen; specimen; container or planter; espalier; trained as a standard

Availability: not native to North America

Description

Height: 10 to 15 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: vase, round

Crown density: dense

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Figure 2. Range

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire, ciliate

Leaf shape: lanceolate, ovate

Leaf venation: bowed, parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, broadleaf 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: purple

Flower characteristics: very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

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

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: susceptible to breakage

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases



Figure 3. Foliage

Use and Management

Princess-Flower requires full sun for best flowering and will thrive on any well-drained soil when regularly watered. Its growth habit is somewhat weedy, requiring training and pruning to develop and maintain it as a tree. It can be trained as a standard or espaliered against a west-facing wall receiving at least five hours of full sun. It can also be trained on a trellis or arbor as a vine. Pinching new growth helps increase branching and will enhance the flower display.

Tibouchina granulosa grows larger (15 to 20 feet tall and wide) and is easier to train into a tree.

Propagation is by cuttings.

Pests

Some of its pests are scales and nematodes.

Diseases

Mushroom root rot in soil which is kept too wet.

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/>