

# *Vitex agnus-castus* 'Rosea': 'Rosea' Chastetree<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Chastetree can be grown as a large, deciduous, multi-stemmed shrub or small, 10 to 15 feet tall tree, and is noteworthy for its showy, summer display (late springtime in the deep South) of fragrant, upwardly-pointing, terminal panicles of pink blooms which are quite attractive to butterflies and bees. The tree is often planted where honey is marketed to promote excellent honey production. The trunk is gray and blocky and somewhat ornamental. The sage-scented leaves of Chastetree are shaped liked a hand, or palmate, and were once believed to have sedative effects. Vitex has the common name "Chastetree" since Athenian women used the leaves in their beds to keep themselves chaste during the feasts of Ceres. Vitex seeds itself into landscaped beds and can become somewhat weedy.

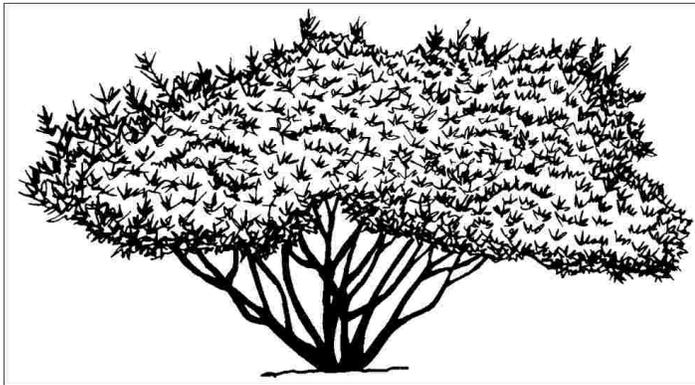


Figure 1. Mature *Vitex agnus-castus* 'Rosea': 'Rosea' Chastetree

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Vitex agnus-castus*

**Pronunciation:** VYE-tecks AG-nus-KASE-tus

**Common name(s):** 'Rosea' Chastetree, 'Rosea' Vitex

**Family:** *Verbenaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** invasive non-native

**Uses:** specimen; container or planter; trained as a standard; deck or patio; highway median

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree



Figure 2. Range

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## Description

**Height:** 10 to 15 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 20 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular

**Crown shape:** vase, round

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** palmately compound

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** lanceolate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous, fragrant

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

**Leaf color:** green, blue or blue-green

**Fall color:** no color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy



Figure 3. Foliage

## Flower

**Flower color:** pink

**Flower characteristics:** showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** unknown

**Fruit length:** unknown

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** black

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; not 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:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** thin, medium

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun or partial shade

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

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** no

**Outstanding tree:** yes

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown

**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

## Use and Management

Chastetree is used effectively in the mixed shrubbery border or as a specimen. It is usually seen as a shrub with a multiple trunk but can be trained in the nursery into a tree with one or several trunks if so desired. Occasionally used as a street or median tree since it will not grow up and into powerlines, but branches tend to droop toward the ground and would hinder traffic visibility if planted too close to the street. Median planting would be fine if there is adequate horizontal space for the crown to develop and spread. Since the flowers attract bees, locate it accordingly.

Chastetree prefers a loose, well-drained soil that is moist or on the dry side, not wet, but will tolerate drained clay or sandy soils. The tree often suffers from dieback in organic, mucky, or other soil which is kept too moist, such as in the New Orleans or Dallas areas. Chastetree should be planted in full sun or light shade, and will tolerate hot weather extremely well, moderate salt air exposure and alkaline soil.

In the colder regions (USDA hardiness zones 6b and 7), Chastetree can be killed to the ground by severe winters and is more often seen as a multistemmed shrub. Chastetree is a fast-grower and can easily recover its size when cold weather prunes it. Very similar to *Vitex negundo*, which also is called Chastetree, *Vitex agnus-castus* is not as cold hardy as *Vitex negundo* (grows in USDA hardiness zone 6a). *Vitex agnus-castus* may survive in USDA hardiness zone 6a if protected from winter winds.

Several other cultivars are available which offer flower color variety. 'Silver Spire' and 'Alba' have white flowers.

Propagate by softwood cuttings in early summer or by seeds.

## **Pests**

No pests are of major concern.

## **Diseases**

Leaf spot can almost defoliate the tree. Root rot can cause decline in soils which are kept too moist.