

Albizia julibrissin 'Alba': 'Alba' Mimosa Tree¹

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Introduction

This fast-growing, deciduous tree has a low branching, open, spreading habit and delicate, lacy, almost fern-like foliage. Fragrant, silky, white puffy pompom blooms, two inches in diameter, appear in abundance from late April to early July creating a spectacular sight. The tree produces numerous seed pods and harbors insect (webworm) and disease (vascular wilt) problems. Although rather short-lived (10 to 20 years), mimosa is popular for use as a terrace or patio tree for its light, dappled shade and tropical effect. Its deciduous nature allows the warming sun to penetrate during the winter. This species is considered invasive and is not recommended for planting in Florida.

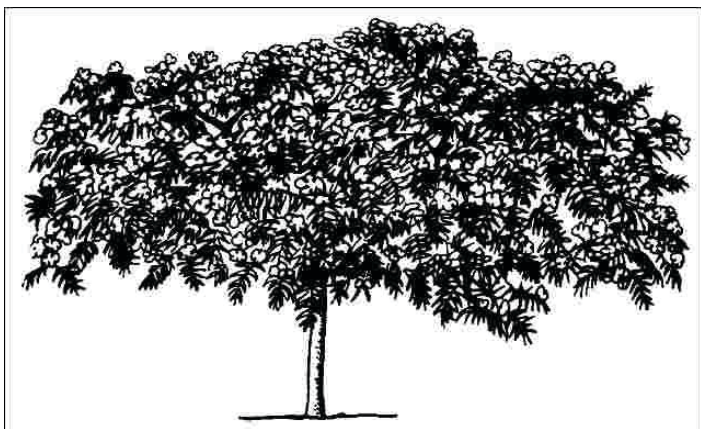


Figure 1. Mature *Albizia julibrissin* 'Alba': 'Alba' mimosa tree.

General Information

Scientific name: *Albizia julibrissin*

Pronunciation: al-BIZ-zee-uh joo-lih-BRIS-sin

Common name(s): 'Alba' mimosa tree, 'Alba' silk tree

Family: *Fabaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 6B through 9B (Figure 2)

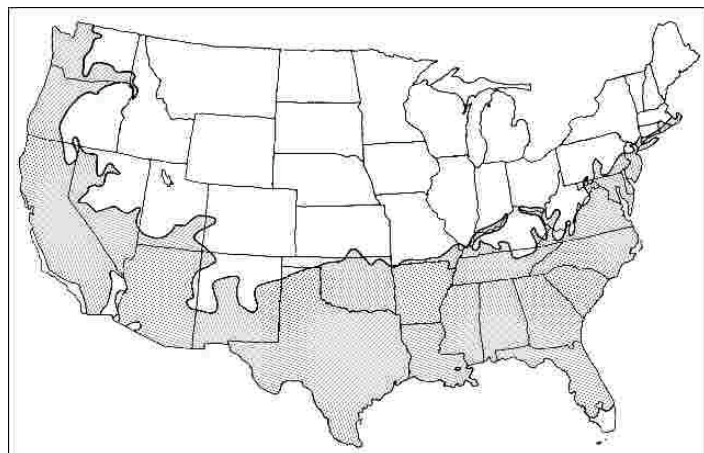


Figure 2. Range.

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: invasive and not recommended (North, Central, South)

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Uses: reclamation; deck or patio; specimen

Description

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 25 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: vase, spreading

Crown density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Figure 3)



Figure 3. Foliage.

Leaf type: bipinnately compound, odd-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: entire, ciliate

Leaf shape: oblong, lanceolate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated

Fruit length: 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; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: susceptible to breakage

Current year twig color: gray

Current year twig thickness: very thick

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: can form large surface roots

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: sensitive to pests/diseases

Literature Cited

Fox, A.M., D.R. Gordon, J.A. Dusky, L. Tyson, and R.K. Stocker. 2008. IFAS Assessment of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas: Status Assessment. http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment/pdfs/status_assessment.pdf (November 16, 2012)

Use and Management

Growing best in full sun locations, mimosa is not particular as to soil type but has low salt-tolerance. Grows well in acidic or alkaline soil. Mimosa tolerates drought conditions well but has a deeper green color and more lush appearance when given adequate moisture. The blooms, leaves, and especially the long seed pods can create a litter problem. Also, the wood is brittle and has a tendency to break during storms, although usually the wood is not heavy enough to cause damage. Typically, most of the root system grows from only two or three large-diameter roots originating at the base of the trunk. These can raise walks and patios as they grow in diameter and makes for poor transplanting success as the tree grows larger.

Unfortunately, mimosa (vascular) wilt is becoming a very widespread problem in many areas of the country and has killed many roadside trees. Despite its picturesque growth habit and its beauty when in bloom, some cities have passed ordinances outlawing further planting of this species due to its weed potential and wilt disease problem.

Several other cultivars exist: 'Rosea' ('Ernest Wilson') has bright pink flowers, is hardier than the species, and is 10 to 15 feet in height; 'Rubra' has deep pink flowers. 'Charlotte', 'Tyron', and 'Union' are reportedly wilt resistant and might be coming into production in selected nurseries in some areas. None are recommended for use in Florida because the species is invasive.

Mimosa readily germinates from its abundant seeds but the wilt resistant trees must be increased by root cuttings.

Pests

Problems include cottony cushion scale, mites, and mimosa webworm.

Diseases

Mimosa (vascular) wilt is quite a problem and is fatal. It can spread to adjacent mimosas by root grafts.