

# *Cassia fistula*: Golden Shower<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Golden shower is a fast-growing tree which reaches 30 to 40 feet in height and 30 to 40 feet wide. The well-spaced branches are clothed with pinnately compound leaves, with leaflets up to eight inches long and 2.5 inches wide. These leaves will drop from the tree for a short period of time and are quickly replaced by new leaves. In summer, golden shower is decorated with thick clusters of showy yellow blooms which cover the slightly drooping branches. The blooms are followed by the production of 2-foot-long, dark brown, cylindrical seedpods which persist on the tree throughout the winter before falling to litter the ground. The seeds contained within are poisonous.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Cassia fistula*

**Pronunciation:** KASS-ee-uh FIST-yoo-luh

**Common name(s):** Golden shower

**Family:** *Fabaceae*

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

**Origin:** native to India, Malaysia, and Southeast Asia

**UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status:** Not considered a problem species at this time, may be recommended (North, Central, South)

**Uses:** street without sidewalk; shade; specimen; tree lawn 4–6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; parking lot island 100–200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft



Figure 1. Full Form—*Cassia fistula*: Golden-shower

## Description

**Height:** 30 to 40 feet

**Spread:** 30 to 40 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular

**Crown shape:** vase, oval, upright/erect

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** medium

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Figure 2. Range

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** even-pinnately compound; made up of pairs of 4 to 8 leaflets

**Leaf margin:** entire, undulate

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 12 to 18 inches; leaflets are 3 to 6 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** yellow

**Fall characteristic:** not showy



Figure 3. Leaf—*Cassia fistula*: Golden-shower

## Flower

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristics:** very showy; emerges in clusters 8"–18" long racemes

**Flowering:** spring to early summer, then again in early fall



Figure 4. Flower—*Cassia fistula*: Golden-shower

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** cylindrical; pod or pod-like, elongated

**Fruit length:** 1 to 2 feet

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** green to black with maturity

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



Figure 5. Fruit—*Cassia fistula*: Golden-shower



## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/branches:** branches droop; not showy; typically one trunk; no thorns

**Bark:** gray and smooth, becoming brownish and rough with age

**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown

**Current year twig thickness:** thick

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown



Figure 6. Bark—*Cassia fistula*: Golden-shower

Credits: Gritta Hasing

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun

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

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** no

**Outstanding tree:** no

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown

**Pest resistance:** free of serious pests and diseases

## Use and Management

Golden shower is ideal for use as a specimen planting. It can look a bit coarse and unkempt for short periods when the leaves drop but the vibrant flower display more than makes up for this. Some communities have planted this as a street tree where it has held up quite well.

Golden shower should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil. The trees are moderately drought- and salt-tolerant. Although golden shower is damaged by temperatures falling slightly below freezing, it will come back with warmer weather. Trees will need occasional pruning when they are young to control shape and develop a uniform crown. Young trees can grow asymmetrical with branches often drooping toward the ground. Staking and proper pruning will help develop a well-shaped and structured crown.

Propagation is by seeds (which are poisonous).

## Pests

No pests are of major concern but occasionally bothered by caterpillars.

## Diseases

Mildew, leaf spot, root rot diseases.

## References

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