Red Silk Cotton Tree

Bombax ceiba



Red Silk Cotton Tree flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 60 feet

Spread: 50 feet

Sunlight: ○

Hardiness Zone: 10

Other Names: Cottontree

Description:

A large, spiny deciduous tree with a straight trunk and horizontal to upright branches in tiered whorls; the trunk is brown when young and slowly ages to grey; red flowers emerge after leaves drop in winter; a stunning landscape tree

Ornamental Features

Red Silk Cotton Tree features showy clusters of red star-shaped flowers with orange overtones and black anthers at the ends of the branches from mid winter to early spring, which emerge from distinctive olive green flower buds. It has attractive green deciduous foliage. The oval palmate leaves are highly ornamental but do not develop any appreciable fall color. It produces tan capsules from mid summer to early fall. The spiny gray bark is extremely showy and adds significant winter interest.

Landscape Attributes

Red Silk Cotton Tree is a deciduous tree with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its average texture blends into the landscape, but can be balanced by one or two finer or coarser trees or shrubs for an effective composition.

This is a relatively low maintenance tree, and should only be pruned after flowering to avoid removing any of the current season's flowers. It is a good choice for attracting birds to your yard. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spiny

Red Silk Cotton Tree is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Shade

Planting & Growing

Red Silk Cotton Tree will grow to be about 60 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 50 feet. It has a high canopy with a typical clearance of 7 feet from the ground, and should not be planted underneath power lines. As it matures, the lower branches of this tree can be strategically removed to create a high enough canopy to support unobstructed human traffic underneath. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 80 years or more.

This tree should only be grown in full sunlight. It is very adaptable to both dry and moist growing conditions, but will not tolerate any standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for xeriscaping or the moisture-conserving landscape. This plant does not require much in the way of fertilizing once established. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. Consider applying a thick mulch around the root zone in both summer and winter to conserve soil moisture and protect it in exposed locations or colder microclimates. This species is not originally from North America.