Tea Tree

Melaleuca alternifolia



Tea Tree flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 20 feet

Spread: 20 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 8

Other Names: Narrow-leaved Paperbark, White Bottlebrush Tree

Description:

This fast growing small tree thrives in moist wetlands, with poor drainage but also tolerates drier soils; creamy white bottlebrush flowers in summer and fall; may be invasive in some areas as seeds are spread by wind and water



Tea Tree in bloom
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Tea Tree features showy clusters of white frilly flowers with creamy white overtones at the ends of the branches from early spring to early summer. It has attractive green evergreen foliage. The tiny needles are highly ornamental and remain green throughout the winter. However, the fruit can be messy in the landscape and may require occasional clean-up. The peeling tan bark is extremely showy and adds significant winter interest.

Landscape Attributes

Tea Tree is an evergreen tree with an upright spreading habit of growth. It lends an extremely fine and delicate texture to the landscape composition which can make it a great accent feature on this basis alone.

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 bees, butterflies and hummingbirds to your yard. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Invasive
- Self-Seeding

Tea Tree is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Shade
- Hedges/Screening
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens

Planting & Growing

Tea Tree will grow to be about 20 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 20 feet. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 3 feet from the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live to a ripe old age of 100 years or more; think of this as a heritage tree for future generations!

This tree does best in full sun to partial shade. It is quite adaptable, prefering to grow in average to wet conditions, and will even tolerate some standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. This plant does not require much in the way of fertilizing once established. It is not particular as to soil type or pH, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This species is not originally from North America.