

Cassia javanica, Pink and White Shower¹

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Family

Fabaceae or Leguminosae, bean family

Genus

Cassia comes from the ancient Hebrew word “quetsi’oth,” first used by Dioscorides, a physician in Ancient Greece (40–90 AD). Linnaeus, also known as the father of taxonomy, was the first to use *Cassia* to signify members of this genus.

Species

The species name *javanica* is the Latin term for Java, where this plant was originally described.

Common Name

Pink and white shower, apple blossom cassia

This tree is referred to as “pink and white shower” because it produces pink and white blooms. It is also called “apple blossom cassia” because its dainty pink and white flowers may be easily confused with those of apple trees.

Description

This deciduous tree is native to Southeast Asia and Indonesia. It grows well in tropical regions of the United States such as Florida, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico, as long as it is in well-drained soil with little threat of freezing temperatures. This tree should be grown in direct sunlight

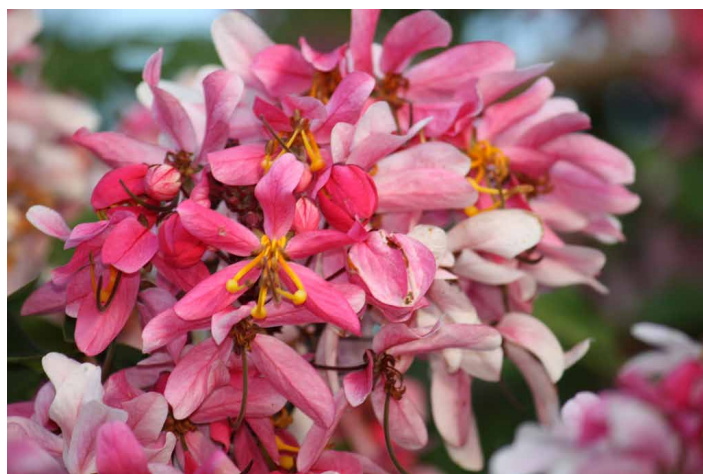


Figure 1. Clustering flowers of *Cassia javanica* (Pink and White Shower)

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for full flowering potential. With proper pruning, pink and white shower can reach heights of 35–45 feet. The leaves are alternately arranged and are pinnately compound. Each leaflet is oval-shaped, 4–5 inches long, and arranged in 5–12 pairs on a leaf. New woody stems are brown and the mature bark is light gray with thick vertical sections of dark brown. Small flowers appear at the end of branches in the summer months, and these blooms display different shades of pink and white on the same tree and on the same flower. Fruits are foot-long dry pods.

Allergen

Members of the genus *Cassia* are moderately allergenic. Oil from the pods may cause skin irritation to some individuals.

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Storm Tolerance

Because of its droopy limbs and tendency not to form a strong, single-leader trunk, the pink and white shower tree is not strongly resistant to wind. However, adequate pruning can help to increase its storm tolerance.

Applications

Horticultural

Cassia javanica is planted primarily as a decorative shade tree. While not as popular as the yellow flowering *Cassia fistula* or golden shower (<http://youtu.be/ZdJ5e70Q8mw>), many people consider pink and white shower to be aesthetically pleasing because of its pink and white blooms that emerge during the summer months. Although pink and white shower is deciduous, it quickly replaces its leaves. Because its leafless season is so short, many find that pink and white shower is still a desirable shade tree throughout the year. Its rapid growth rate makes it an ideal tree for homeowners looking to increase their tree cover. Additionally, pink and white shower's natural resistance to pests increases its desirability as a landscape tree that is commonly used as an ornamental street tree.

Additional References

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