

***Cassia bahamensis* Bahama Cassia¹**

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Introduction

Bahama Cassia (also known as *C. chapmanii*) is a tall upright shrub that may reach a height of 3 to 9 feet (Fig. 1). Like many other Cassias, this shrub is covered with little yellow flowers in the fall which are quite attractive next to the dark green, compound leaves. Several kinds of butterflies, including the Sulphurs, are attracted to these 1/2- to 1-inch-wide flowers. Bahama Cassia is relatively short-lived and may begin to decline after only four or five years. However, this plant often has seedlings popping up nearby. This could be a mixed blessing by providing for a source of new plants and creating a potential weed problem.

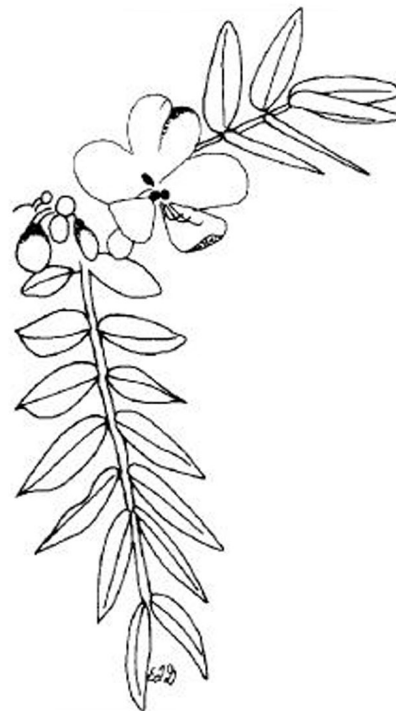


Figure 1. Bahama Cassia

General Information

Scientific name: *Cassia bahamensis*

Pronunciation: KASS-ee-uh baw-haw-MEN-sis

Common name(s): Bahama Cassia, Bahama Senna

Family: *Leguminosae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Uses: specimen; screen; border; mass planting; attracts butterflies; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size)

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Description

Height: 3 to 9 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

Plant habit: upright; round

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: even-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: revolute

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristic: fall flowering; winter flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated

Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristic: showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy

Current year stem/twig color: brown

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: good

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: native plant that often reproduces into nearby landscapes

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Bahama Cassia could be used in the landscape as a specimen planted by itself, or as a screen, hedge or border. In a sunny location it grows to about 8 feet tall so would make a nice background plant in a shrub border. Allow plenty of room for its rounded, spreading habit of growth. Plants can easily grow to become 6 to 10 feet wide.

In the sun, Bahama Cassia will be bushy and seldom exceeds a height of 3 to 5 feet; it will obtain a height of 9 feet in partial shade. This shrub prefers well-drained, acid, sandy soil and is drought tolerant. Prune the plant back to the ground in the spring every few years to rejuvenate it, or following a winter with freezing temperatures. Freezing temperature will usually kill all tissue above ground. The plant often sprouts back quickly in the spring in hardiness zone 9 and 10.

Cassia can be propagated by using seeds or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

Bahama Cassia is not susceptible to any diseases of major concern. As with other Cassias, caterpillars may consume the leaves and flower buds, especially in the fall.