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Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ PROGRAM

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Hibiscus syriacus: Rose-of-Sharon[1]

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Introduction

Rose-of-Sharon is valued for large flowers produced in summer when few other shrubs bloom. It is useful as a garden accent due to its strict, upright habit. The open, loose branches and light green leaves make Rose-of-Sharon ideally suited to formal or informal plantings, and with a little pruning makes an attractive, small specimen tree. The plant grows in sun or partial shade and in any soil. Rose-of-Sharon grows 8 to 10 feet tall and spreads 4 to 10 feet. The growth rate ranges from slow to moderate, and transplanting is easy. Several roots are usually located just beneath the soil surface.



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Hibiscus syriacus*: Rose-of-Sharon
Credit: Ed Gilman

General Information

Scientific name: *Hibiscus syriacus*

Pronunciation: high-BISS-kuss seer-ee-AY-kuss

Common name(s): Rose-of-Sharon, Shrub-Althea

Family: *Malvaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 9A (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

nvasive potential: invasive non-native

Uses: specimen; container or planter; trained as a standard; deck or patio

Availability: not native to North America

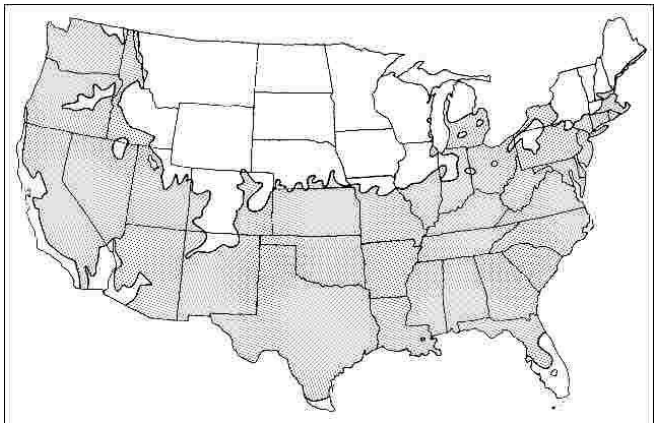

Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 8 to 12 feet

Spread: 4 to 10 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: upright/erect

Crown density: open

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: dentate

Leaf shape: rhomboid, ovate

Leaf venation: palmate, pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

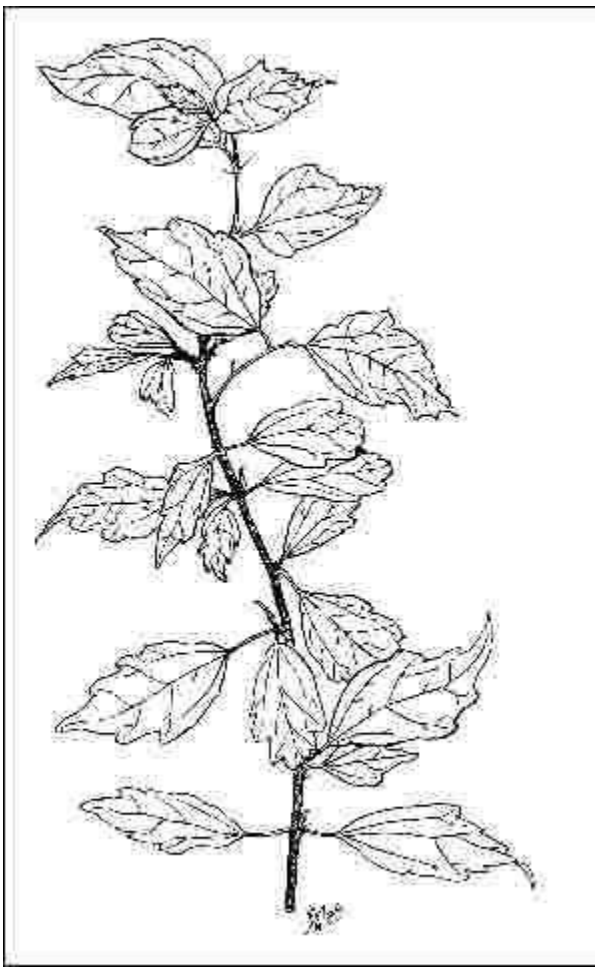

Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: red, pink, white/cream/gray, purple, blue, lavender

Flower characteristics: very showy

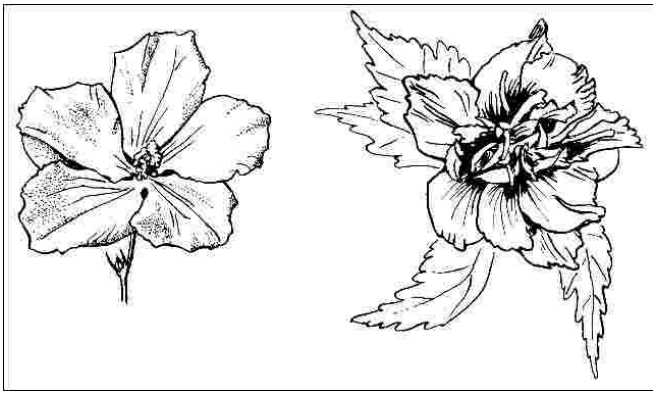

Figure 4. Flower

Fruit

Fruit shape: irregular

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

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

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: susceptible to breakage

Current year twig color: gray

Current year twig thickness: thin, medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade

Soil tolerances: sand; loam; clay; acidic; occasionally wet; 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: resistant

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

The single or double flowers are in shades of red, pink, white and purple, depending on the cultivar. Individual flowers stay open for one day and close at night. Since plants bloom on new growth, shaping or pruning can be done at any time. However, pruning is usually not required since the plant grows slowly and keeps a tight upright form. Prune in late winter or early spring in northern climates. Frequent severe pruning gives fewer but larger flowers; no or little pruning gives many smaller flowers.

Although tolerant of poor soils and drought in sun or light shade, this upright, deciduous shrub requires ample moisture to flower its best and to avoid leaf-drop. Some protection from mid-day or afternoon sun is beneficial for optimum plant appearance. Tolerance to aerosol salt and wet soils combined with drought-tolerance make this a fine plant for many landscapes.

Many cultivars are listed but few will be seen in catalogs. Cultivars include: `Admiral Dewey' - single, white flowers; `Ardens' - purple, semi-double flowers; `Bluebird' - single, bluish purple flowers; `Boule de Feu' - double, purplish red flowers; `Coelestis', single violet blue with reddish purple throat; `Coerulis' - semi-double, light purple flowers; `Coerulis Plenus' - double, lavender flowers; `Diana', with pure white flowers, four to six inches in diameter, that stay open at night; `Duc de Brabant' - double, deep purplish pink flowers; `Hamabo' - single, pale pink flowers, with reddish stripes halfway up the petals; `Jeanne d'Arc' - double, white flowers; `Lady Stanley' - semi-double, white flowers with bluish pink on each petal and red lines running half way up the petal; `Leopoldii Plenus' - double flowers, blushed pink; `Lucy' - dark pink, double flowers; `Mauve Queen' - mauve flowers, `Paeoniflorus' - double pink flowers; `Red Heart', single pure white flowers with deep red center; `Rubus' - rose pink, single flowers, petals darker at the base; `Souvenir de Charles Breton' - semi-double, light purple flowers; `Totus Albus' - single, pure white flowers; `Woodbridge' - single flowers, reddish purple, darker at the base.

Propagation is by cuttings.

Pests

Although usually strong and easy to grow, hibiscus can be bothered by aphids which accumulate at the tips of stems, causing new growth to be misshapen. Aphids may cover the leaves with sticky honeydew. The insects can be dislodged with high pressure water sprays from the garden hose or controlled by pinching off the part of the twig with the insects. Over-fertilizing increases aphid infestations.

In northern gardens, Japanese beetles are particularly fond of the flowers.

Diseases

If leaf spots are seen, pick off and destroy the infected leaves.

If bacterial leaf spot causes problems, pick off and destroy infected leaves.

Canker can kill branches or entire plants. Bright, reddish-orange fruiting bodies may appear on the bark. Prune out infected branches.

Flowers may be infected with a blight caused by a fungus.

Bud drop can be caused by too much or too little water or over fertilization.

[1] This document is ENH454, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu for the currently supported version of this publication. © UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 *To learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water and natural resources, visit ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/.*

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