



## *Tibouchina urvilleana* Princess-Flower<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

This sprawling, evergreen shrub or small ornamental tree ranges from 10 to 15 feet (20 feet with proper training) in height (Fig. 1). It can be trimmed to any size and still put on a vivid, year-long flower display. The dark green, velvety, four to six-inch-long leaves have several prominent longitudinal veins instead of the usual one, and are often edged in red. Large, royal purple blossoms, flaring open to five inches, are held on terminal panicles above the foliage, creating a spectacular sight when in full bloom. Some flowers are open throughout the year but they are especially plentiful from May to January. Princess-Flower is ideal for the mixed shrubbery border or used in small groupings to compound the impact of bloom-time.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Tibouchina urvilleana*

**Pronunciation:** tib-oo-KYE-nuh er-vill-ee-AY-nuh

**Common name(s):** Princess-Flower

**Family:** *Melastomataceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; espalier; hedge; near a deck or patio; screen; trainable as a standard; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

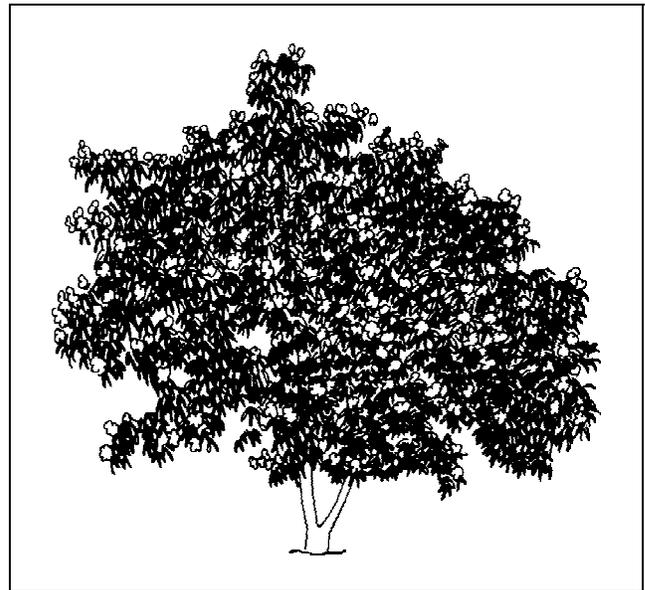


Figure 1. Middle-aged Princess-Flower.

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 10 to 15 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** round; vase shape

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** coarse

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** ciliate; entire

**Leaf shape:** lanceolate; ovate

**Leaf venation:** bowed; parallel

**Leaf type and persistence:** broadleaf evergreen; evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** purple

**Flower characteristics:** very showy; year round flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

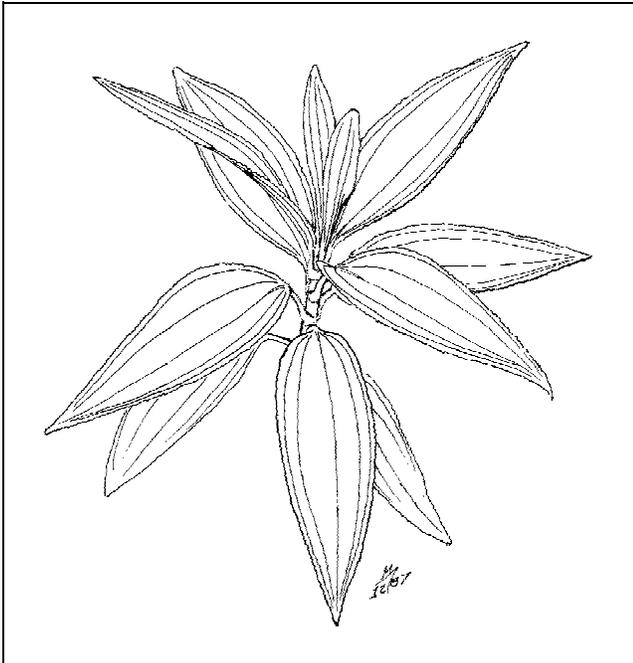


Figure 3. Foliage of Princess-Flower.

### Pests

Some of its pests are scales and nematodes.

### Diseases

Mushroom root rot in soil which is kept too wet.

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

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

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

Princess-Flower requires full sun for best flowering and will thrive on any well-drained soil when regularly watered. Its growth habit is somewhat weedy, requiring training and pruning to develop and maintain it as a tree. It can be trained as a standard or espaliered against a west-facing wall receiving at least five hours of full sun. It can also be trained on a trellis or arbor as a vine. Pinching new growth helps increase branching and will enhance the flower display.

*Tibouchina granulosa* grows larger (15 to 20 feet tall and wide) and is easier to train into a tree.

Propagation is by cuttings.