Holmskioldia sanguinea

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Introduction

Chinese Hat Plant grows to be about 6- to 8-feet-tall and can make an attractive shrub if properly grown (Fig. 1). The most noted feature of the plant is the bright orange flowers which to some people resemble a hat. Flowers produced year-round provide for quite a show.

General Information

Scientific name: Holmskioldia sanguinea
Pronunciation: holm-skee-OLD-dee-uh san-GWIN-ee-uh
Common name(s): Chinese Hat Plant
Family: Verbenaceae
Plant type: shrub
USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: trained as a standard; hedge; specimen; border
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Description

Height: 5 to 8 feet
Spread: 5 to 8 feet
Plant habit: vase shape; round
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: serrate
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: brachidodrome; pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Figure 1. Chinese Hat Plant.

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**Holmskioldia sanguinea** -- Chinese Hat Plant

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** orange  
**Flower characteristic:** year-round flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** unknown  
**Fruit length:** unknown  
**Fruit cover:** unknown  
**Fruit color:** unknown  
**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy  
**Current year stem/twig color:** green  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun  
**Soil tolerances:** acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay;  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown  
**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:** not known to be invasive  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

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**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Use and Management

This plant has been around for many decades but has yet to make a big impact on the retail garden center market. This may change as nursery operators continue to search for “new and different” plants. Lack of popularity may be due to the less than symmetrical growth habit and the tendency toward thinning at the bottom of the plant. The plant also becomes woody with age, but it can be rejuvenated simply by cutting back close to the ground every few years.

Chinese Hat Plant can be used best toward the back of a shrub border. Let it grow to its natural height, but hide the bottom of the plant with shorter shrubs planted about 5 feet in front. This will allow the most unusual flowers to display at the top of the border. The other technique that will make it more attractive is to grow the plant in an open location receiving all-day sun. Place it far enough away from structures and other plants so that it will not have to be clipped. Provide regular irrigation when soil becomes dry.

Pests and Diseases

Soil borne nematodes present the biggest challenge to growing this plant.