Sophora tomentosa

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

Necklace-Pod is a dense, multi-trunked, 6- to 10-foot-tall shrub that is beautiful in many aspects (Fig. 1). The evergreen foliage of this plant is a wonderful silvery green color. The odd-pinnately compound leaves consist of 11 to 21 leaflets that are oval in shape. The leaflets, rachis, petiole and young branch tips are covered with a silvery, velvety pubescence that gives the plant its silvery cast. Bright yellow flowers appear in terminal spikes that are 4- to 16-inches-long; they occur periodically throughout the year. These showy flowers open from the base to the elongating tip of the flower spike. Attractive brown seedpods are borne on the plant after flowering ceases, but they can frequently be found on the plant together. These pods are 2 to 8 inches long and are so compressed between the seeds that they look like necklace beads. BE CAREFUL! The seeds are dangerous to eat and contain an alkaloid, cytisine, which is emetic and purgative.

General Information

Scientific name: Sophora tomentosa
Pronunciation: soe-FOR-ruh toe-men-TOE-suh
Common name(s): Necklace-Pod, Silver-Bush
Family: Leguminosae
Plant type: tree
USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: native to Florida
Uses: specimen; mass planting; border; accent; attracts butterflies

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 6 to 10 feet
Spread: 8 to 12 feet
Plant habit: vase shape; round
Plant density: moderate

Figure 1. Necklace-Pod.

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Sophora tomentosa -- Necklace-Pod

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Growth rate:** moderate
**Texture:** fine

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate
**Leaf type:** odd-pinnately compound
**Leaf margin:** entire
**Leaf shape:** ovate
**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:** flowers periodically throughout the year

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** pod or pod-like
**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches

**Fruit cover:** dry or hard
**Fruit color:** green
**Fruit characteristic:** persists on the plant

**Trunk and Branches**

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

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun
**Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay
**Drought tolerance:** high
**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown
**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches
Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

The Necklace-Pod is quite suited to coastal locations but may be grown inland as well. This shrub may be used for its foliage color and inflorescence, and it is excellent when utilized as a specimen plant or in a mass planting. This plant’s flowers also attract many species of butterflies. Older specimens can be pruned into small trees.

Plant Necklace-Pod in full sun on a well-drained sandy soil. This plant is moderately drought tolerant and has low fertilizer requirements. It will tolerate high levels of salt spray and is at home on the inland side of the dunes along the beach.

Sophora tomentosa can be grown from seed.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.