

Cercis occidentalis Western Redbud¹

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INTRODUCTION

This small tree or shrub will usually grow several trunks from its base unless properly pruned (Fig. 1). It is native to California, Arizona and Utah, but grows predominantly in California foothills below 4000 feet. The temperature needs to drop below 28-degrees F. in order for flowering to be profuse. The plant is not grown in the eastern U.S.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Cercis occidentalis*

Pronunciation: SER-sis ock-sih-den-TAY-liss

Common name(s): Western Redbud, California Redbud

Family: *Leguminosae*

USDA hardiness zones: 6 through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree

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

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: vase shape

Crown density: moderate

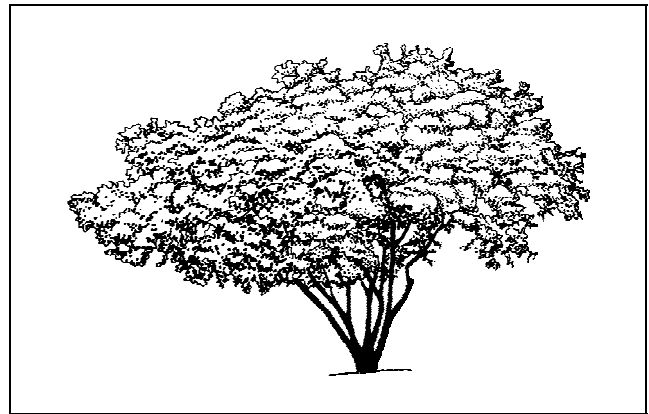


Figure 1. Mature Western Redbud.

Growth rate: medium

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: cordate; ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: not showy

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Flower

Flower color: lavender; pink

Flower characteristics: spring flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; no significant litter problem; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; 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; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: low

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

Cercis are best propagated by seed. Use ripe seed to plant directly, or, if seed has been stored, stratification is necessary before sowing in a greenhouse. Cultivars can be propagated by grafting onto seedlings, or by summer cuttings under mist or in a greenhouse.

Pests and Diseases

Probably similar to the pests affecting other Redbuds.