Purple Catalpa

Catalpa x erubescens 'Purpurea'



Purple Catalpa foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 50 feet

Spread: 50 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 5a

Description:

A medium sized shade tree with enormous leaves that are blackish-purple when young, maturing to dark green; very showy white flowers with purple and yellow markings in late spring; long narrow beanpod-shaped fruit in fall are very ornamental

Ornamental Features

Purple Catalpa features showy panicles of fragrant white bell-shaped flowers with yellow eyes and purple spots rising above the foliage in late spring. It has attractive green foliage with hints of purple which emerges deep purple in spring. The enormous lobed leaves are highly ornamental and turn an outstanding yellow in the fall. The fruits are showy green pods which fade to brown over time, which are carried in abundance from mid summer to late winter. The fruit can be messy if allowed to drop on the lawn or walkways, and may require occasional clean-up.

Landscape Attributes

Purple Catalpa is a deciduous tree with a shapely oval form. Its strikingly bold and coarse texture can be very effective in a balanced landscape composition.

This tree will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and is best pruned in late winter once the threat of extreme cold has passed. It is a good choice for attracting hummingbirds to your yard, but is not particularly attractive to deer who tend to leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Messy

Purple Catalpa is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Shade

Planting & Growing

Purple Catalpa will grow to be about 50 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 50 feet. It has a high canopy with a typical clearance of 6 feet from the ground, and should not be planted underneath power lines. As it matures, the lower branches of this tree can be strategically removed to create a high enough canopy to support unobstructed human traffic underneath. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 70 years or more.

This tree does best in full sun to partial shade. It is very adaptable to both dry and moist growing conditions, but will not tolerate any standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for xeriscaping or the moisture-conserving landscape. It is not particular as to soil type or pH, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This particular variety is an interspecific hybrid.