

Paulownia tomentosa
Empress tree, Princess tree, Foxglove tree



Paulownia tomentosa (Empress tree, Princess tree, Foxglove tree) originally comes from China where it grows as a pioneer species on the edge of woodland up to an altitude of 1,800 metres. In Japan, this tree has been in cultivation for a long time under the name *Kiri Zoku*, temple tree; in the Western world, the species was not described until 1712 by German scholar Engelbert Kaempfer. The princess tree was named by German doctor Philipp von Siebold in honour of princess Anna Paulowna Romanov. *Paulownia tomentosa* can grow up to a height of twenty metres but the semi-open crown tends to develop to twelve metres and the same wide.

Paulownia tomentosa is known in particular for its large, bell-shaped, blue-violet flowers which adorn the tree in May like a kind of giant foxglove. The princess tree blooms on bare wood, the conspicuous brown flower buds develop in the summer before however and are clearly visible in the tree. After flowering pointed capsules are formed which contain winged seeds. The decorative leaf is heart-shaped, 3-5-lobed and with smooth edges as large as an elephant's ear. The leaf emerges blue-green, changes to bright green with a grey-green underside in summer before ending up yellow-brown in autumn. The name *tomentosa* relates to the hairy underside of the leaf. *Paulownia tomentosa* has a slightly grooved, grey-brown bark and the hollow branches, covered with white lenticels, grow fast up to a metre a year.

The princess tree has fragile branches and, therefore, a sheltered site is important. Protection against the wind also benefits the early blossom. As a pioneer species, the princess tree prefers a sunny site but is tolerant of many soil types or pH value and roots easily. In warm climates the species can become invasive but this is not the case in cooler regions. Owing to the extensive, fleshy root system it is a sensible idea to plant the tree away from buildings. In large gardens and parks *Paulownia tomentosa* performs very well however and is wonderful for bees.

TYPES OF PLANTING

Tree types: standard trees, multi-stemmed trees, climate trees, shade trees, characteristic trees | **Topiary on stem**: multi-stem umbrella

USE

Location: park, central reservation, large garden, cemetery, traffic areas, industrial zones | **Pavement**: none | **Planting concepts**: Climate planting, urban planting

CHARACTERISTICS

Crown shape: rounded | **Crown structure**: semi-open | **Height**: 10 - 12 m | **Width**: 10 - 12 m | **Winter hardiness zone**: 5B - 9B

ASPECTS

Wind: intolerant to wind | **Soil**: loess, light clay, sand, loamy soil | **Nutrient level**: moderately rich in nutrients, rich in nutrients | **Soil moisture level**: moist | **Light requirements**: sun | **pH range**: acidic, neutral, alkaline | **Host plant/forage plant**: bees, nectar value 1, pollen value 1 | **Extreme environments**: tolerant to dryness, tolerates air pollution, tolerates heat

PLANTKENMERKEN

Flowers: raceme, bell-shaped, striking, standing, big, flower-scented | **Flower colour**: blue-violet | **Flowering period**: May - May | **Leaf colour**: blue-green, bright green, underside grey-green | **Leaves**: deciduous, cordate, big, hairy | **Autumn colour**: yellow-brown | **Fruits**: striking, raceme, capsule | **Fruit colour**: cinnamon-brown | **Bark colour**: grey-brown | **Bark**: striped | **Twig colour**: brown | **Twigs**: with lenticels | **Root system**: deep, extensive, coarse roots, fleshy roots, root suckers

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