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NOW APPEARING WHAT'S IN BLOOM

# JAPANESE PAGODA A GOOD URBAN FIT

BY KITTY WEST  
Special to The Gazette

**What it is:** Japanese Pagoda-tree (*Sophora japonica*).

**About it:** Japanese Pagoda-tree, a member of the Fabaceae family, is well-suited for urban environments. It has a rapid growth rate and tolerates city conditions, heat and drought. It is considered a medium-sized deciduous tree and a good choice for planting under power lines. This tree is native to eastern Asia, but it is frequently seen in the eastern United States. It's also known as the Chinese Scholar Tree.

**Use in the landscape:** The Japanese Pagoda-tree may be used as a shade tree or ornamental. When grown in a yard, it can grow 50 to 75 feet high and spread 40 to 60 feet. When grown in compacted soil along pavement, its height will be reduced to 30 to 40 feet. The fernlike foliage is 6 to 10 inches long.



PHOTOS BY KITTY WEST

Japanese Pagodatrees

Its white, fragrant blooms appear in mid- to late summer, hang in clusters and will live about a month — but you'll have to wait for them. The blooms don't appear until the tree is 10 to 15 years old. The flowers are replaced by ornamental yellow seed pods that resemble

strings of beads. Birds will eat the seeds. The fall color is yellow.

**Cultivation:** The Japanese Pagoda-tree should be grown in a sunny location with moist, well-drained soil. Spring is the best time to plant this tree; prune young trees in autumn. It is essen-

tially pest-free. The rapid rate of growth tends to promote weak wood and brittle stems, which can result in storm damage as the tree ages. Cold hardiness and exposure are topics that should be addressed when considering a Japanese Pagoda-tree. Both of these concerns can be addressed by planting the tree in a sheltered location. Proper site selection and the use of a tree wrap could minimize the adverse effects of cold and wind. Regent is the cultivar of choice, selected for its relatively straight central leader and earliness to flower (at about 5 years old). Japanese Pagoda-tree is hardy in Zones 4-8.

Contributed by Kitty West, Colorado Master Gardener Apprentice. For answers to your horticultural questions, contact the Master Gardener Help Desk at 520-7684 or email CSUmq2@elpasoco.com.



These Japanese Pagodatrees are growing near the intersection of Weber and Uintah streets.

1208 N. WEBER, OPEN TREES