

# *Jacaranda mimosifolia* D. Don

## Jacaranda

(*Bignonia caerulea*, *Jacaranda acutifolia*, *Jacaranda ovalifolia*)

**Other Common Names:** Blue Trumpet Tree, Fern Tree, Green Ebony.

**Family:** *Bignoniaceae*.

**Cold Hardiness:** Useful in USDA zones 10 (9b) to 11.

**Foliage:** Evergreen to semi-deciduous in climates with colder winters or a long dry period, may have a brief deciduous period before new leaves bud out in spring; opposite; bipinnately compound leaves, 12 to 18 long with 8 to 20 pairs of pinnae each holding 14 to 24 or more pairs of leaflets; leaflets oblong-elliptical, obovate, to rhomboid;  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{5}{8}$  long; margins entire; tips acute to acuminate, pubescent to nearly glabrous; bright green in leaf, no fall color when semi-deciduous; very feathery texture.

**Flower:** Handsome erect 8 to 10 mostly terminal pyramidal panicles; trumpet-shaped to narrowly bell-shaped; five-lobed corolla, more or less two-lipped; flowers  $1\frac{3}{4}$  to  $2\frac{1}{4}$  long by  $1\frac{1}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  wide; light lavender-blue to purplish-blue with a yellow throat, rarely white; blooms spring to early summer in our region, sporadically with a spring peak in the tropics; pleasantly fragrant; flowers are the primary feature.

**Fruit:** Fruit are oblong orbicular 2 wide mahogany to black two-valved dehiscent disk-like capsules with numerous winged seeds; persistent and can be a minor litter problem in manicured lawns.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — moderately thick; glabrous; green then light brown to gray; strongly flattened at the nodes; newest stems decidedly concave on the sides opposite the buds; this affect alternates pairs of sides at each node; Buds — green; conical; pointing out from the stem; tiny relative to the stem; set on the stem slightly higher above the intersection of the petiole and twig than is common for most tree species; Bark — green then light brown, light gray to dark gray at maturity.

**Habit:** In the tropics plants may reach 45 to 50 with an upright oval to rounded crown atop a single crooked trunk, but are usually much smaller trees with multiple trunks due to dieback from periodic freezes in our region; fine textured in foliage, medium when deciduous.

**Cultural Requirements:** Best in full sun, but tolerant of partial shade; adapted to a wide range of soils as long as they are well drained; heat, drought, and somewhat wind tolerant, but not particularly tolerant of foliar salt exposure; best flowering is in Mediterranean climates; the thin bark can be readily damaged by lawn mower blight and weed eaters; regular pruning is required to maintain an attractive form; use grafted trees or rooted cuttings from mature trees to promote early flowering.

**Pathological Problems:** None of consequence if planted in suitable conditions; if on poorly drained soils, then mushroom root rot can be problematic.

**Ornamental Assets:** Light ferny foliage with beautiful lavender-blue to bluish purple flowers.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** Even in extreme southern portions of our region, this tree is not fully winter hardy, oft damaged by temperatures below 25 to 30°F, but it rapidly recovers; can become weedy.

**Landscape Utilization:** In tropical regions this is a versatile patio, parking lot island, specimen, street or shade tree; in our region it is suitable for in-ground use only in sheltered locations in warmer portions of 9b as a dieback large shrub or small tree; perhaps as a large patio plant moved to a sheltered location or greenhouse in winter.

**Other Comments:** This is one of the more popular and commonly used of all ornamental trees in tropical landscapes; sometimes used as a timber tree in its native land, where the wood is sold as

Green Ebony; the genus name is a derivation of the native Brazilian name for the tree; the specific epithet refers to the resemblance of the foliage to that of Mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*).

**Native Habitat:** Argentina and Brazil; widely naturalized in subtropical and tropical climates.

**Related Taxa:** The genus contains about 45 species of trees, several of which are used in tropical landscapes, but only *J. mimosifolia* is of importance in the U.S.; 'Alba' is a white flowering form.

**References:** Boyle, 1960; Courtright, 1988; Dehgan, 1998; Friend, 1942; Gilman, 1996; Odenwald and Turner, 1996; Rauch and Weissich, 2000; Riffle, 1998; Watkins and Sheehan, 1975; Whistler, 2000.

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