

# Plant of the Quarter



Caesalpinia granadillo/ Bridalveil Tree

Choices for Winter blooming trees are few compared to other seasons. So I would like to introduce you to trees with outstanding foliage, bark or character. This quarter, let's talk about the **Caesalpinia granadillo** or **Bridalveil Tree**. I have coveted this tree ever since first seeing it at a local wastewater treatment plant's demonstration garden, so my sympathetic daughters planted one in my garden.

This wonderful mid-sized tree is relatively new. Introduced 25 years ago, it is originally native to Venezuela and Northern South America.

Unfortunately, there is not much written about this species, but we asked our colleague, Dr. Derek Burch, for as much information as available.

**HABIT/HEIGHT/SPREAD** This is a medium tree with a maximum height of 35', but typically reaches 25–30'. It is fine in texture, with gracefully arching branches. Left to itself, it will form an inverted cone similar to the American elm.

**FOLIAGE/ LOWERS/FRUIT** Bridalveil's evergreen foliage is pinnately compound, which means there are many leaflets held from each petiole (stem of the leaf). The effect is of delicate lace, hence "bridalveil." They move gracefully in the breeze and create dappled shade, allowing enough sunlight to pass through branches to support sod growth. Deep yellow pea-like flowers are borne in summer and fall, are about 1" across and are most profuse on the top of the tree. Flowers are significant but not showy and fruit is inconspicuous.

**BARK** The bark...now we get to the good stuff. The bark of this tree is dark brown and smooth and peels away in large patches revealing a smooth creamy white surface, beautiful even from a distance. The bark is hard and very strong in windy conditions.

**PROBLEMS** There are no major pests and fruit litter is not a problem. Watch for necessary structural pruning in the first 3 years. Start the tree with a central leader, but don't be concerned if side branches also grow strong once the tree reaches 10–12', since it will then take on its natural vase-like form.

**RECOMMENDATIONS** Site this species in full sun in well-drained soil. Because of its moderate size it is suitable for residential sites. It is a fast grower, moderately drought-tolerant, with medium fertilizer needs. Look for trees planted in the City on the medians on Cleary Blvd just west of Pine Island Road and on the City Hall campus.



**PURCHASING AND PLANTING** Look for a tree with a dominant leader and plant slightly higher (about 1") than the height in the pot. Examine the trunk and look for the flare. All trees have a flare at the base. If not, it has been planted too deep in the container. Remove soil on top of the root ball until the flare and the first order of roots are exposed and then plant. Create a tree ring and walled berm around the newly planted tree that is a minimum of 3' diameter and water several times a week until it is established. Keep the area weed free. Use little or no mulch, kept 2–3" away from trunk.

For more information on this or any previously featured plant, contact Patrice Sonnelitter at 954.797.2639.

**Good luck and happy botanizing!**