

Sesbania species

Sesbania formosa, more commonly known as The White Dragon Tree is a small tree growing to less than 3.5m in height. It is an Australian native whose natural habitat is north-west Australia where it normally found along watercourses. Much of the natural range of this tree, which takes in the Mandora Salt Marsh the Great Sandy Desert area, is arid desert area with limited watercourses and swamps. The exceptionally large yellow-green pea-flower blooms are arranged in long racemes that come in great masses very conspicuous from afar. A similar but significantly different family member is *Sesbania tormentosa* from Hawaii.

This is an extremely fast growing tree in its tropical habitat and would make a stunning addition to any garden with a warm climate and Summer rainfall or a plentiful water supply. Its watercourse habitat is suggestive of a preference for moist if not permanently wet soils, but this could be duplicated by supplementary Summer watering. It has not been cultivated widely in Australia, but it is believed that it is well worth trying in alternative warm areas.

Propagation

Cultivation is from seed without any specific requirement for pre-treatment.

WHEN TO SOW – Sow in warmer areas at any time and in colder areas after the danger of frost passing. Please note that this tree is tropical or sub-tropical in its native range.

WHERE TO GROW – In full sun in any good soil. In its native habitat this tree is found along watercourses or in swampy areas, but it is believed that it is best sited in lighter soils with good drainage for best results.

SOWING – Fill pot or tray with moist sandy soil, sow seeds on the surface, compress lightly and cover lightly with media. Keep soil moist and avoid waterlogging. Cover with clear polythene and remove this when seeds start to germinate – estimated in 3 - 5 weeks. Place in warm shaded position to germinate.

CULTIVATION – Pot on when large enough to handle. Transplant to sunny garden position at about 20cm. Water in well and regularly around roots until established and then regularly in hot weather particularly in drier areas. Use light applications of slow release low-phosphate organic fertiliser when planting out.