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Robinia - Growing Guide

Growing Robinia

Robinia are a small genus of North American trees and shrubs. Their name commemorates Jean Robin, herbalist to Henry IV of France (d. 1629). They are amongst the most ornamental of all hardy trees both in leaf and in flower. The leaves are pinnate and the pea shaped flowers are borne in pendulous racemes followed by flat brown seed pods with many seeds. The stems and branches are often spiny.

Robinia are suitable for any ordinary soil and grow best in dry sunny situations where soil drainage is good. In improved soils they tend to grow exponentially which usually causes their brittle branches to snap off in the wind or when branches get too heavy with new growth. For this reason, in a smaller garden context, they are best pruned hard after flowering to maintain the shape of the tree at a reasonable size and to encourage more flowering on the newer growth in the next season.

Robinias are suckering trees which can provide opportunities for lifting suckers with roots to transplant elsewhere. In reality the suckers need to be removed at the end of each season to preserve vigour in the main tree. Seed is the easiest method of propagation and these should be sown in a cold frame in the autumn.

All Robinia are extremely tolerant of polluted atmospheres and grow especially well in cities on poor soils.

Robinia hispida, the Rose acacia, is more of a shrub than a small tree and grows to only 8-10ft with a similar spread. The flowers are rose pink in 5in long racemes and the stems are extremely bristly or spiny. The pinnate leaves are around 12in long and composed of nine to thirteen ovate leaflets. This plant thrives when grown on a hot wall and will need firm staking initially.



Robinia hispida 'Rosea'



Robinia hispida 'Rosea'



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Robinia hispida 'Rosea'



Robinia pseudoacacia 'Frisia'



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Robinia pseudoacacia 'Frisia'


Robinia x slavinii


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Robinia x slavinii


Robinia x slavinii


Robinia x slavinii 'Hillieri'


Robinia x slavinii 'Hillieri'


Robinia x slavinii 'Hillieri'

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