

SOME EXOTIC ORNAMENTALS OF KASHMIR

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Trees and Shrubs from India, both wild and cultivated, have been recorded in the works of Royle (7), Hooker (4), Brandis (3), Lambert (5), Bor (2), Randhawa (6), etc. These works dealt with both natural and exotic elements in general combined terms because of different degrees of naturalisation of some exotics to have formed part of natural vegetation. The present communication brings to the notice of horticulturists some beautiful exotics, which are on their way to become popular ornamentals in the valley of Kashmir. These species with high reproductive potential, given due consideration, are liable to become a part of our vegetation in due course of time as others including *Robinia pseudoacacia* L., *Ailanthus altissima* (Mill.) Swingle, etc. have done.

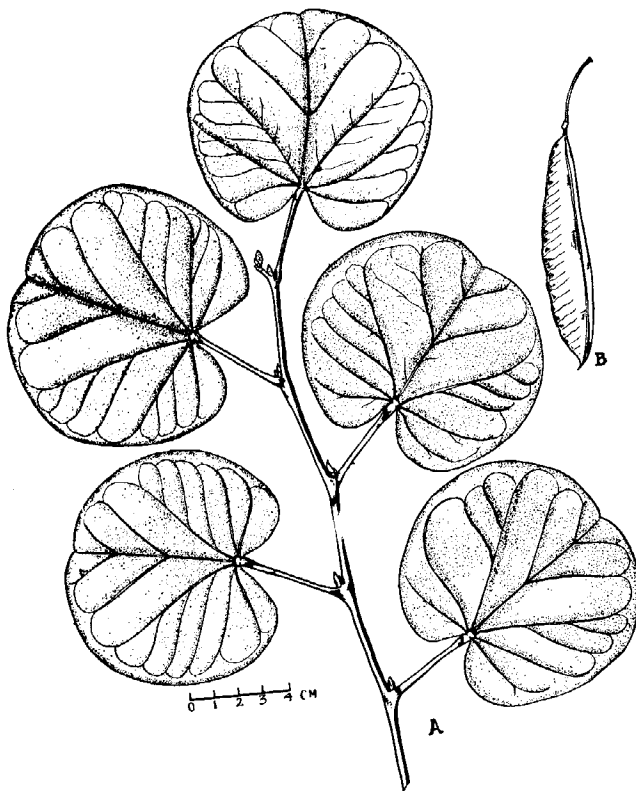


Plate 1

Cercis siliquastrum L. (Plate 1)

Deciduous spreading tree, bark rough. Leaves petioled, suborbicular with cordate base, 8-14 cm across. Flowers 3-6 together in fascicles on main trunk and principal branches, 1.5-2 cm long, purple, papilionaceous. Stamens 10, all free. Pod 7-11 cm long, flattened, ventral suture winged. Seeds 6-12, ovoid, hard, slightly compressed.

This beautiful tree with clusters of flowers emerging from the bark grows in several gardens and house lawns in Kashmir and produces abundant viable seeds. Not uncommonly several young plants may be found close to the parent tree. The tree belongs to the mediterranean regions of Europe and W. Asia.

Tamarix parviflora DC. (Plate 2)

A shrub or small tree, branches slender with reddish brown bark. Leaves ovate acuminate with semiamplexicaule base, 2-3 mm long, distant on flowering shoots, close and often covering the sterile shoots. Flowers on lateral 2-4 cm long racemes, 4-merous, pedicels hardly 1 mm long. Petals pinkish, persistent. Stamens 4, anthers cordate apiculate, filaments free. Fruit 3-4 mm long, a dehiscent capsule. Seeds linear-lanceolate with soft silvery plume.

This handsome ornamental is common in several gardens and private houses in Kashmir. It produces abundant viable seeds. The original home of the species is S. Europe.

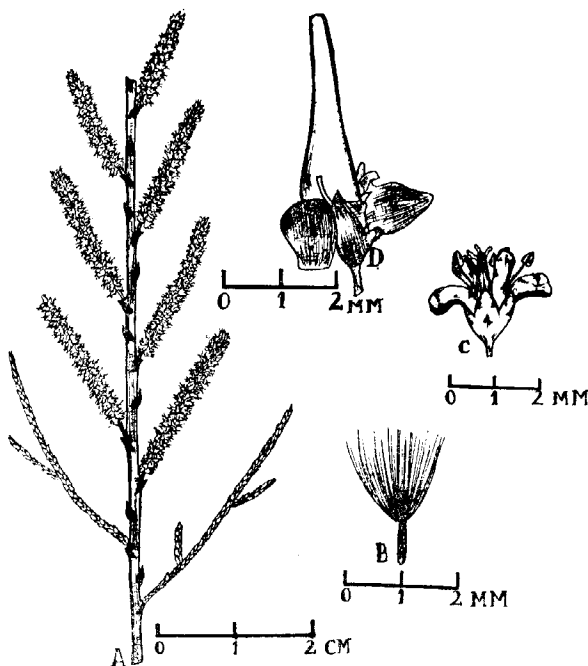


Plate 2

Koelreuteria paniculata Laxm. (Plate 3)

A deciduous medium sized tree. Leaves alternate, odd pinnate or partly bipinnate, 15-35 cm long ; leaflets 7-15, irregularly crenate. Flowers yellow in large terminal panicles upto 50 cm long. Calyx lobes 5, unequal. Petals 4 (or three in staminate flowers), turned upwards or strongly reflexed. Stamens usually less than 10. Fruit a capsule 3-6 cm long, somewhat pyramidal in shape, inflated, walls papery, valves three, gradually narrowed to pointed apex. Seeds rounded, black, 4-5 mm across, hard.

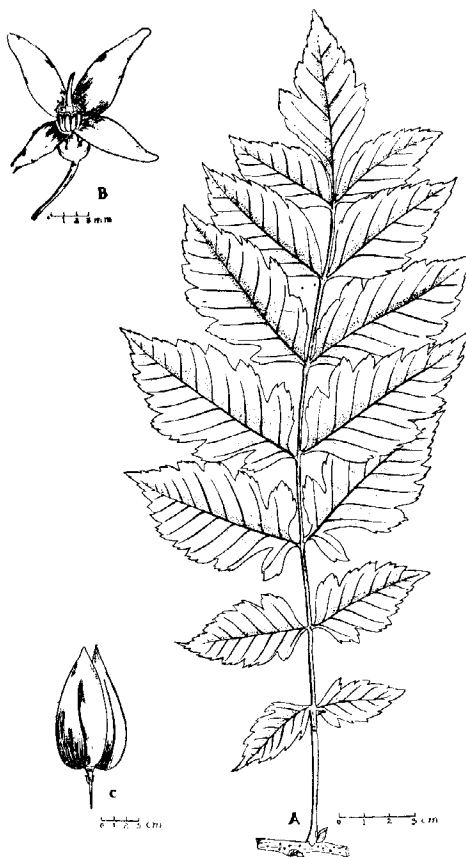


Plate 3

No doubt an introduction, it thrives better in Kashmir. The plant is essentially cultivated in China, Korea and Japan. It is often known as "Pride of India" (Bailey, 1), a misleading name suggesting the occurrence of this plant in India, where it is very rare. This name, however, pertains to Indian plants *Melia azedarach* L. (Bailey, 1) and *Lagerstroemia flosreginae* Retz. (Randhawa, 6).

The tree is quite conspicuous by its golden yellow flowers which appear in July-August, as there is hardly any tree flowering in Kashmir at that time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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