

Popping Pod, *Bluebell*

GENERAL

Origin	: sub-tropical, tropical
Humidity	: semi-arid, semi-humid, very humid
Propagation	: sowing and pricking out, cuttings, division
Maintenance	: high

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: vulnerable
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: high
Salinity/ppm	: moderate (2000 ppm)
Hardiness	: 0°C

SHAPE

Type	: perennial
Height	: 0.8 m
Spread	: 0.6 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: lilac, light violet
Size	: 5 cm
Period	: May - October

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: capsule
Fruit size	: 3 cm

Popping Pod is an erect, herbaceous perennial, native to Central America, named for its habit of dispersing its seeds from pods when they burst open. In its habitat, it grows on woodland edge and meadows on loamy, in wet soils on the edge of rivers, as well as on wasteland. Not very common in Arriyadh, it is being seen more and more in parks and gardens. It is a fast-growing, dense subshrub with many hairy stems, growing up to a height of 80 cm. The simple, linear leaves are opposite and elliptic; the stem is quadrangular and often purplish-black. Its fleshy, rhizome roots help it to spread vigorously. Violet-blue flowers are produced prodigiously throughout the year. They are funnel-shaped and up to 5 cm long. The ripe brown fruits, up to 3 cm long, are capsules, each with 7–8 seeds that explode with a bang when wet, hurling the seed away. Plants require full sun to light shade, and well-drained, sandy soil. Leaves may be blackened by frost in Arriyadh, but they will grow back again. Plants require regular irrigation, although some drought is tolerated. Propagation can be carried out by division, seeds and cuttings. Popping Pod's bright flowers and dark-green leaves make it an attractive addition to private gardens and public open spaces, where it is good for mass planting. However, *R. tuberosa* can quickly begin to look straggly and, with frost damage, unsightly. Although not prone to insects or diseases, it is a high-maintenance plant requiring regular trimming and cutting back in late winter to encourage new growth.

