

Milo, Portia Tree, Seaside Mahoe

GENERAL

Origin	: tropical
Vigour	: fairly fast growing
Humidity	: semi-humid, very humid, extremely humid
Propagation	: sowing and pricking out, cuttings
Maintenance	: low

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: vulnerable
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: medium
Salinity/ppm	: very high (12000 ppm)
Hardiness	: +3°C

SHAPE

Type	: tree
Height	: 3 m-8 m
Spread	: 2 m-4 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: yellow, secondary: dark red
Size	: 5 cm - 8 cm
Period	: May - June

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: capsule
Fruit size	: 4 cm

Commonly known as the Portia Tree or Seaside Mahoe, this is a small tree originating in southeast Asia and found throughout the tropics. Since its introduction in Arriyadh a few years ago, it has been a successful tree. Growing rapidly, it reaches a height of up to 8 metres and a spread of 4 metres. The bark is brown and corrugated, while the twigs scaly. The shiny green leaves are heart-shaped, from 5 to 20 cm long. The cup-shaped, hibiscus-like, pale-yellow flowers are 5 to 8 cm in size, with a dark blotch at the base of the petals. Produced throughout the year, they last for one to two days, before turning maroon and dropping. The fruit capsule is a flattened leathery ball with greyish-brown seeds. The Portia Tree grows in many soil types including those based on quartz, limestone, and basalt; it favours neutral soils and sandy coastal soils, tolerating saline conditions. It requires full sun, is cold-sensitive, but withstands mild frosts and resists wind. *T. populnea* is drought-tolerant, but requires regular irrigation in summer in Arriyadh. It is easily propagated from scarified seed and cuttings. Pests are not generally observed. Used for medicinal purposes, this tree is much valued for its timber and for soil stabilisation and windbreaks. It makes a good, compact tree for gardens, patios and terraces, and can be planted in groups in parks or used as a shade tree for pathways. Easily kept in shape by pruning, only low maintenance is necessary.

