

Chaste Tree, *Monk's Pepper*

*Vitex agnus-castus* is also called *Vitex*, Chaste Tree, Chasteberry or Monk's Pepper. It is native to the Mediterranean region, but meanwhile it can be found in warm and sub-tropical climates extending as far as southwest Asia. The shrub or small multi-branched tree grows between 1 and 6 metres high. The leaves are long-stemmed and palmate, but the five leaves are separate. Flowering is from June to November. The inflorescences are branched and spike-like, with long stamens. The single fragrant flowers are pale blue-violet, while the fruits are fleshy reddish-black salal. In former times, *Vitex* fruits were used as an alternative to pepper. *Vitex* requires full sun or partial shade; it loves moist soil and can stand high salinity. It can often be found next to rivers in the whole area of its distribution. The *Vitex* can stand light frost. It can very often be seen in Arriyadh, where it withstands the harsh urban conditions next to King Fahd Road, for example. It has been successfully planted in many of the Murrabba parks at the King Abdulaziz Historical Centre, and in Wadi Hanifah. However, it should not be excessively pruned; occasionally is enough. For landscape design purposes in Arriyadh, it can be recommended as a specimen, dominant plant, grouped or massed planting, and as a hedge. The bee-attracting plant can be recommended for parks, public open spaces, street planting, pedestrian precincts, as shelter, for noise protection and as a screen.



GENERAL

Origin	: sub-Mediterranean, Mediterranean, sub-tropical
Humidity	: semi-arid, semi-humid
Propagation	: sowing and pricking out, cuttings
Maintenance	: moderate

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: resistant
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: medium
Salinity/ppm	: moderate (2500 ppm)
Hardiness	: -21°C

SHAPE

Type	: shrub
Height	: 1.5 m-7.5 m
Spread	: 2 m-5 m
Foliage	: deciduous

FLOWER

Colour	: lilac, light blue
Size	: 30 cm
Period	: June - November
Smell	: scented, flower, sweet

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: berry
Fruit size	: 0.3 cm