Cow-Itch Tree, *Norfolk Island Hibiscus, Primrose Tree, Pyramid Tree*

GENERAL

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

CONDITIONS

Dessication	:	vulnerable
Stagnant water	:	vulnerable
Irrigation	:	medium
Salinity/ppm	:	moderate (3000 ppm)
Hardiness	:	-6°C

SHAPE

Type	:	tree
Height	:	6 m-15 m
Spread	:	4 m-9 m
Foliage	:	evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	:	pink, red, white
Size	:	5 cm - 7 cm
Period	:	May - July

FRUIT

Type of fruit	:	schizocarp
Fruit size	:	3 cm

Cow Itch Trees occur wild in northern Australia, in the coastal regions of Queensland, New South Wales and several islands. Hence, they tolerate very high salinity and wind as well as full sun, heat and drought. An established tree in Wadi Hanifah was neglected for years and did well without additional watering, even though it grew at the valley's edge. Light frosts of up to –5°C are tolerated except by young plants. They grow to a medium size of oval shape and about 10 metres in height, but may reach 15 metres under conditions similar to their native environment. The leathery foliage is evergreen, entire and may reach 10 cm length. From late spring onwards, there are many pink or mauve flowers about 5 to 7 cm across. These are reminiscent of hibiscus flowers, since both belong to the mallow family (Malvaceae). The inflorescences are followed by valved capsules including many round seeds, but also tiny stiff hairs that may irritate the skin. It is therefore not a good choice in pedestrian areas, but Cow Itch Trees are excellent roadside trees that form symmetrical pyramidal crowns without pruning. They are maintenance-free and will tolerate any well-drained soil. In containers, they can grow into a shrub to some 3 metres high and may form a screen or windbreak. They are multiplied by seeds or cuttings in spring. Lagunarias are rarely infested by pests or diseases.