

# LATE FLOWERING TREES PROVIDE MID-SUMMER COLOR, INTEREST

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Trees which flower early to mid-summer can be particularly important in the landscape. These trees add not only color at a time when the landscape is otherwise green, but diversity as well. Four particularly exciting plants for mid-summer bloom include Yellowwood, Goldenraintree, Kousa Dogwood, and Goldenchain Tree.

**American Yellowwood** (*Cladrastis lutea*), a native mid-summer flowering tree is particularly spectacular. This round-headed tree, at maturity, reaches 30 to 50 feet in height and width. While young, it is somewhat narrow and upright. V-crotches can be a problem, but prompt pruning will correct the problem. The bark is smooth and gray, resembling American Beech. The pinnate compound leaves make this plant particularly interesting. Each leaf has seven to eleven leaflets which are oval and smooth.

The new and summer foliage is a vibrant yellow-green. Fall color, which is quite dependable in Central Michigan, is a good yellow to brown. The white flowers are at their peak in Central Michigan during mid- to late June. These drooping flowers normally are in full bloom in the Boston and northern Ohio areas during late May or early June. The white flowers are held in drooping clusters or racemes, 8 to 16 inches in length. Fruit becomes brown and is quite effective with the shape mirroring the flower shape. This is an excellent specimen tree in groups or as single plants.

Yellowwood prefers fertile, well-drained soil, while being adapted to a wide range of pH's, from acid to alkaline. It should be planted in full sun or at least 80% sun. When planted in semi-shaded areas, *Botryosphaeria* Canker can become a severe problem.



**Drooping clusters** of white flowers grace American Yellowwood in late May or early June in northern states.

**Goldenraintree** (*Koelreutaria paniculata*) has a bipinnately compound leaf, about 14 inches long, with seven to fifteen leaflets. At maturity, this perfectly round, dense small tree, reaches 25 to 35 feet in height. The leaves are purple when unfolding early in the spring, becoming a dull green during the summer with dependable yellow to yellow-orange fall color. *Koelreutaria* flowers during mid-July with unique bright yellow flowers, 12 to 15 inches in length.

This plant competes extremely well in turf or in beds. It prefers well-drained to droughty soils and is quite adaptable to areas of high air pollutants, as well as salt and many urban problems. It is a particularly outstanding tree with few or no insect or disease problems.



**The bright yellow flowers** in mid-July are just one benefit of the relatively disease and insect free Goldenraintree.

**Kousa Dogwood** (*Cornus kousa*), a native of China, should be looked upon as an exciting understory or specimen plant in full sun. It is more upright than Flowering Dogwood, usually reaching 25 to 30 feet in height. When young, it is somewhat upright-vase-shaped, becoming oval at maturity. It can be grown as a multiple-stem or single-stem tree. The bark is spectacular as the plant becomes older, exfoliating, being multi-colored (pale yellow and brown).

Flowering in the most northerly area is dependable. In Central Michigan, it flowers from early through late June, sometimes into July after the leaves are out. Kousa Dogwood's flowering bracts are a pale to clear white. They are usually somewhat pointed and, again, extremely low temperature hardy, often to minus 30°F. Of the cultivars available, *Cornus kousa chinensis* 'Milky Way' is the most dynamic, with a somewhat more spreading habit of growth and the flowers being considerably more delicate with

extremely pointed bracts. *C. kousa* can be used as a small tree specimen or in mass planting. It seems to thrive in sunnier locations as contrasted to *C. florida*.

The fruit is effective late August through October, being 1/2 to 1 inch in diameter. This reddish, globular fruit somewhat resembles raspberries. Although seedy, they are quite tasty.

The summer foliage is a good clear green with fall color either not developing or developing extremely late in the season. When it does develop, the fall color is a dull maroon. Kousa Dogwood's main advantages over our native *C. florida* include extremely low temperature hardy flower buds, ease of transplanting, and flowering during early summer. Kousa Dogwood is an exciting addition to our summer landscape.

**Goldenchain Tree** (*X Laburnum watereri*) is 12 to 16 feet in height with a 9- to 10-foot spread. The foliage is a dull blue-green with little or no fall color. The trifoliate leaves are all elliptical in



June flowers of the Goldenchain Tree add to the tree's effectiveness in mass plantings.

shape. Perfect yellow flowers come out during early or mid-June. They are borne in 7- to 10-inch pendulous racemes. This small tree is a good specimen in full sun or in protected areas, usually exposed to the north or northeast.

These trees with summer flowers are not only outstanding as specimens, but also integrate well into mass plantings. They all seem relatively drought tolerant, having few or no insect and disease problems.

Although their fall color varies, the uniqueness of early to mid-summer blooms makes these truly exciting additions to the landscape. Although borderline hardy in Central and Northern Michigan, they should be considered somewhat commonplace from Detroit all the way south to the Washington, DC area.

When looking for diversity with excitement, yet low maintenance, Yellowwood, Goldenrain-tree, Kousa Dogwood, and Goldenchain Tree should be high on the list. **WTT**

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