

## *Cercis siliquastrum*

### *Judas Tree*



**May 2014**

*Cercis siliquastrum - a prolific show of flowers in spring*

*Cercis siliquastrum* is a deciduous shrub or small tree native to Southern Europe and Western Asia. Its range has now extended far beyond this thanks to cultivation over the centuries; it is believed to have arrived in the UK in the 17th century.

The reason that most people plant this tree is for the glorious abundance of deep pink flowers which appear in late April - May. They are produced on the older growth and cover the stems, branches and sometimes even grow on the trunk.

The flowers are quickly followed by the foliage, bright green and fresh, developing into rounded heart shape leaves attractive in their own right. In Autumn the foliage turns yellow but the feature of *Cercis* in this season are the clusters of reddish purple flattened seed pods which hang from the branches.

There are two notions for the common name 'Judas Tree', the first pertaining to the myth that Judas Iscariot hung himself from this tree after his betrayal of Jesus Christ. The second is that it is a derivation from the French *Arbre de Judée* (tree of Judea) where the tree was a common sight.

## **Plant Profile**

**Name:** *Cercis siliquastrum*

**Common Name:** Judas tree

**Family:** Caesalpiniaceae

**Height:** up to 10m

**Demands:** Prefers a sunny position and is accepting of most soils types. Tolerant of dry areas but not damp.

**Foliage:** Bright green, heart shaped foliage. Yellow in autumn

**Flower:** Crimson pink pea like flowers smother the branches in spring

**Fruit:** Red-purple flat seed pods hang in clusters in Autumn



*Judas Tree, 18-20-25cm standards in air-pot*

Deepdale

The name *Cercis* comes from the Greek *kerkis* "shuttle" because of the seed pods resemblance to a weavers tool; *siliquastrum* comes from Latin *siliqua* "pod".



*Cercis* seed pods in the autumn



Attractive heart-shaped foliage



3-4m multistem *Cercis siliquastrum*



Flowers of the Judas tree growing from the trunk



2-3m multistem plant, beautiful in full flower