Castor Bean

Ricinus communis



Castor Bean flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 10 feet

Spread: 6 feet

Spacing: 3 feet

Sunlight: ○

Hardiness Zone: (annual)

Other Names: Castor Oil Plant

Description:

This spectacular, fast growing plant is primarily cultivated for the tropical look of its large leaves and bright pink to red flowers; an excellent accent, border or container plant that is visually stunning

Ornamental Features

Castor Bean features showy clusters of red pincushion flowers at the ends of the stems from mid to late summer. Its attractive enormous lobed palmate leaves emerge red in spring, turning dark green in color the rest of the year. It features abundant showy red capsules from mid summer to early fall, which fade to brown over time. The dark red stems are very colorful and add to the overall interest of the plant.



Castor Bean
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Castor Bean is an herbaceous annual with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its wonderfully bold, coarse texture can be very effective in a balanced garden composition.

This is a high maintenance plant that will require regular care and upkeep, and should be cut back in late fall in preparation for winter. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Castor Bean is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use

Planting & Growing

Castor Bean will grow to be about 10 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 6 feet. When grown in masses or used as a bedding plant, individual plants should be spaced approximately 3 feet apart. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground. Although it's not a true annual, this fast-growing plant can be expected to behave as an annual in our climate if left outdoors over the winter, usually needing replacement the following year. As such, gardeners should take into consideration that it will perform differently than it would in its native habitat.

This plant should only be grown in full sunlight. It does best in average to evenly moist conditions, but will not tolerate standing water. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in rich soils. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This species is not originally from North America, and parts of it are known to be toxic to humans and animals, so care should be exercised in planting it around children and pets.