Goldenrain Tree
*Koelreuteria paniculata*

A summer flowering tree

The goldenrain tree was given its common name for its large clusters of small, golden-yellow flowers. Most goldenrain trees bloom in July and cover the tree’s canopy. The papery fruit capsules develop by mid August. Hard black seeds about the size of a pea mature within the inflated capsule.

A late-flowering cultivar of the goldenrain tree called ‘Rose Lantern’ begins flowering the last weeks of August and continues with its bright yellow floral display into September, followed by rosy-red capsules in October and November. The name ‘Rose Lantern’ suggests what its papery capsules look like—minature Japanese lanterns.

The native range of the goldenrain tree extends from eastern China to the Korean peninsula and Japan.
Explore the goldenrain trees of the Arboretum.

During the month of August, you should find the goldenrain trees of the Arboretum at several different stages from flowering to fruiting. Some trees might even have both flowers and fruits. Also notice the pinnately compound leaves.

This is what the leaves look like:           This is where to find goldenrain trees:

In China the goldenrain tree was a common planting around temples, palaces, and gardens, and was used to mark the tombs of important officials. In Japan, the use of goldenrain tree is also linked to religious practices. In Korea, the species has been preserved in local forests by villagers for use in shelterbelt plantings to protect homes from exposure in periods of sea water flooding, wind, and salt spay.

Goldenrain trees have caught the eye of Western botanists and gardeners since 1747, when Pierre d’Incarville, a Jesuit priest, introduced the species to Europe from China. By 1763, this charming tree was being grown in the Jardin du Roi in Paris, and in 1809 it made its first known appearance in the United States when Thomas Jefferson received a shipment of seeds from Madame de Tessé, a French aristocrat and fellow botany-lover with whom he often traded plants. It has since become a popular garden ornamental. Though its flower and fruit look delicate, the goldenrain tree is known to be tough, and well-adapted to tough urban conditions like poor soil, road salt, heat, and drought.

Did you know?

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