

***Dombeya* spp. Tropical Snowball¹**

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Introduction

A native of the tropical parts of Africa, Tropical Snowball is grown more for its flower display than anything else (Fig. 1). The coarse-textured foliage is simple with shallow or deep palmate lobes. Bright pink or red flowers are prominently displayed on the new growth in the summer and sporadically throughout the year. Some types have white flowers.

General Information

Scientific name: *Dombeya* spp.

Pronunciation: dom-BEE-yuh species

Common name(s): Tropical Snowball

Family: *Byttneriaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

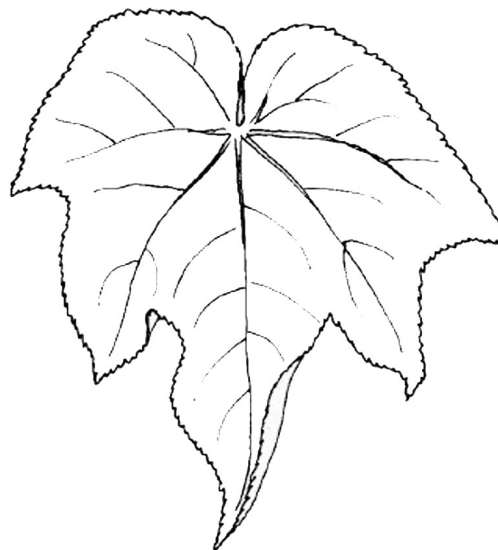


Figure 1. Tropical Snowball.

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: trained as a standard; accent; cut flowers; screen; foundation; border

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 6 to 10 feet

Spread: 6 to 8 feet

Plant habit: oval

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: fast

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: lobed

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: palmate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red; pink

Flower characteristic: summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit cover: unknown

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay

Drought tolerance:

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

Snowball is most often used as a specimen in a shrub border or near the corner of a building. Its beautiful flowers make this a premium shrub for locating in any part of a sunny landscape. Flower number is reduced in partial shaded locations.

Tropical Snowball grows fast and adapts to a wide variety of soils. Several fertilizer applications each year help keep leaves dark green all year long. Some micronutrient deficiency symptoms appear in soils with a pH above 8.0. Regular applications with appropriate fertilizers prevent symptoms from appearing.

Pests and Diseases

Aphids and scales often infest the foliage and stems. Sooty mold often follows. Soil borne nematodes can stress the plant by reducing the size of the root system.

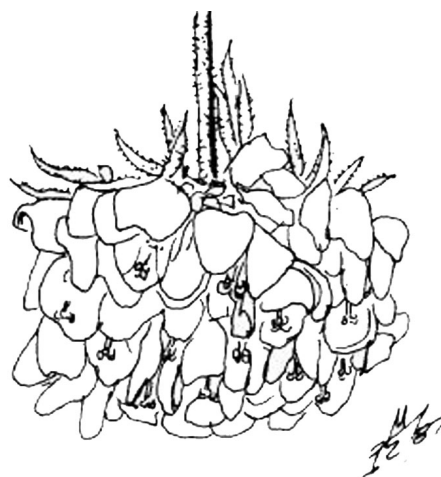


Figure 3. Flower of Tropical Snowball.