



Brazilian Cloak

Megaskepasma erythrochlamys

General Information	Family	Acanthaceae	Origin	Central America
	Appearance	Evergreen, veined foliage with scarlet/dark red flowers.	Maintenance	Consistently moist soil
			Height	12-15ft
			Houston Zoo Location	Across from the Clouded Leopards, and Wortham World of Primates
		Flower	Dark red flowers in the late winter/early spring	

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ Will not tolerate temperatures at or below freezing
- ❖ Its nectar will attract hummingbirds
- ❖ Will occasionally be attacked by mealy bugs and scales



Floss Silk Tree

Ceiba speciosa

General Information	Family	Bombacaceae	Origin	South America
	Appearance	Deciduous foliage with pink flowers. Trunk has spiny, sharp edges.	Maintenance	Average water needs
			Height	Over 40ft
			Houston Zoo Location	Duck Lake
		Flower	Pink flowers in mid fall	

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ Resistant to drought and moderate cold
- ❖ In younger trees, the trunk is green due to its high chlorophyll content, which makes it capable of performing photosynthesis when leaves are absent
- ❖ The fluffy material found inside the fruit pods has been used for stuffing pillows



Sausage Tree

Kigelia africana

General Information	Family	Bignoniaceae	Origin	Central and South Africa
	Appearance	Deciduous glossy foliage, with large, wrinkled maroon trumpet-shaped flowers. The unique fruits grown on the tree look like giant sausages.	Maintenance	Low
			Height	Up to 40ft
			Houston Zoo Location	Lion exhibit
	Flower		Large, wrinkled, maroon or dark red trumpet-shaped flowers appear between August-October	

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ Rely on pollination by bats. Flowers and their nectar emit a special scent at nighttime that the bats are attracted to
- ❖ Baboons, elephants, giraffes, hippos and monkeys all eat the fruit from this tree
- ❖ The fruit can be up to 2 ft long and weigh 20lbs, so falling fruit can be very dangerous to humans and animals!



Baobab Tree

Adansonia digitata

General Information	Family	Malvaceae	Origin	Africa
	Appearance	Deciduous tree; loses its leaves in the dry season. White flowers appear in the late fall to early winter, and gray fruits grow as well.	Maintenance	Low
			Height	Up to 70ft
			Houston Zoo Location	Lion exhibit
	Flower		Large, heavy white flowers appear from October to December	

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ The trunk of the tree can store water in dry periods
- ❖ The flowers open only at night and are pollinated by fruit bats
- ❖ This tree can live for several **thousand** years!



Royal Poinciana

Delonix regia

General Information	Family	Caesalpiaceae	Origin	Madagascar
	Appearance	Compound leaves, large scarlet orange flowers and long pods.	Maintenance	Drought tolerant
			Height	20-30ft
			Houston Zoo Location	Lion exhibit patio
			Flower	Orange-red flowers in the late spring through summer

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ This tree grows very fast, up to 5ft a year until maturity
- ❖ Tolerates salty conditions and can be grown in coastal areas
- ❖ It is so loved in the city of Miami, Florida that there is an annual festival to celebrate its' flowering



Bald Cypress

Taxodium distichum

General Information	Family	Taxodiaceae	Origin	South Florida to West Texas and southeastern Oklahoma.
	Appearance	Deciduous conifer. Foliage is spirally arranged along the stems. New growth is a very light green turning to a softer but darker green in the summer. Fall color is a rich brown.	Maintenance	Prefers acidic soils, very adaptable tree
			Height	50-70ft
			Houston Zoo Location	Duck Lake, Cypress Circle
			Flower	Brown inconspicuous flowers in the spring

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ The fruit of this tree attracts birds, squirrels and other small mammals
- ❖ Has a rapid growth rate
- ❖ This species is very adaptable to wet and dry sites and thrives in many soil types



Formosa Palm

Arenga engleri

General Information	Family	Arecacea	Origin	Native to islands south of Japan
	Appearance	Long triangular fishtail-shaped leaves. Leaves are dark green to olive on the topside and silvery beneath.	Maintenance	Not drought tolerant
			Height	10 ft
			Houston Zoo Location	Outside Reptile House
		Flower	Red, orange, and green flowers in mid summer	

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ Parts of plant are poisonous if digested
- ❖ The flowers have a sweet fragrance and produce red to deep purple fruits
- ❖ Formosa palms and other palms of this genus are used to make sugar, starch, wine and fiber



Azalea

Rhododendron spp.

General Information	Family	Ericaceae	Origin	Found on every continent except Africa and South America
	Appearance	Flowering shrub. Many azalea varieties have different flower types, sizes, and petal shapes.	Maintenance	Moderate temperatures, lots of shade, moist soil with good drainage.
			Height	3-6 ft
			Houston Zoo Location	Reflection pool
		Flower	Come in shades of pink, white, purple, orange and red depending on species	

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ We have several types of azaleas at the zoo such as the George Tabor, Formosa, and Conversation Piece
- ❖ There are over 3,000 different species of Rhododendron grown in the U.S.
- ❖ All azaleas are rhododendrons, but all rhododendrons are not azaleas



Golden Trumpet Tree

Tabebuia chrysostricus

General Information	Family	Bignoniaceae	Origin	Central and South America
	Appearance	Deciduous tree with a velvet or fuzzy texture.	Maintenance	Consistently moist soils
			Height	30-40 ft
			Houston Zoo Location	Duck Lake
			Flower	Yellow flowers in late winter/early spring

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ Handling this plant may cause skin irritation or allergic reaction
- ❖ This plant is attractive to bees, butterflies, and birds
- ❖ Requires full sun exposure



Banana Shrub

Michelia figo

General Information	Family	Magnoliaceae	Origin	China
	Appearance	A medium sized evergreen shrub. Leaves are glossy, medium green. Blooms in spring and sporadically throughout the summer. Flowers have a powerful fragrance that is like ripe bananas.	Maintenance	Average water needs, not a fast grower
			Height	6-20 ft
			Houston Zoo Location	Across from Meerkats
			Flower	Burgundy, creams, & yellows. Blooms mid-spring to late summer

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ Named after the distinct banana scent of its flowers
- ❖ Plant was introduced to the U.S. in the 1700's and is commonly found in the South
- ❖ Is useful in shade gardens to serve as a background and windshield for smaller woodland plants



Jerusalem Thorn

Parkinsonia aculeata

General Information	Family	Leguminosae	Origin	Native to Southwestern U.S. and Mexico
	Appearance	Thin branches and twigs have green bark and are covered with thorns up to 1 in long.	Maintenance	Drought tolerant, thrives in heat
			Height	20-25 ft
			Houston Zoo Location	Outside the Brown Education Center
			Flower	Small yellow blooms in the spring

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ Leaves appear shortly after rainfall and fold up at night
- ❖ It can be damaged at temperatures below 18 degrees Fahrenheit
- ❖ Native Americans harvested the seeds of Jerusalem thorn which they sun dried for storage and parched over dry heat before eating



Rangoon Creeper

Quisqualis indica

General Information	Family	Combretaceae	Origin	Philippines, India, and Malaysia.
	Appearance	Tropical flowering vine that can reach up to 70 ft. It has a unique bloom; one plant will carry 3 different colors of flowers. And they are fragrant too!	Maintenance	Average water, partial sun
			Height	20-70 ft
			Houston Zoo Location	Meerkats
			Flower	White, pink, and red blooms in summer and autumn.

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ Plant has spines/sharp edges, use caution when handling
- ❖ Can be a noxious weed or invasive
- ❖ The fragrant flowers bloom white and change to pink and then bright red over a 3-day bloom period



Tropical Hydrangea

Dombeya Wallichii

General Information	Family	Sterculiaceae	Origin	Africa
	Appearance	A fast growing medium size tree. Produces fragrant flowers that last over 1 month.	Maintenance	A strong grower, it requires full sun and average water requirements
			Height	15-20 ft
			Houston Zoo Location	Outside the Reptile House
	Flower		Pink and red in late winter/early spring	

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ Some say the flowers of this plant smell like a birthday cake
- ❖ It will not lose its leaves in the winter unless the temperature falls below 20 degrees Fahrenheit
- ❖ The genus Dombeya is named after Joseph Dombey, an 18th century French botanist, doctor and explorer



Sasanqua Camellia

Camellia sasanqua

General Information	Family	Theaceae	Origin	Eastern and Southern Asia
	Appearance	Evergreen shrubs, leaves are thick and glossy, with large flowers varying in color from white to pink and red, and yellow in some species	Maintenance	Will not tolerate drought
			Height	2-20m
			Houston Zoo Location	Next to Sea Lions
	Flower		Pink flower with yellow stamen	

Gee Whiz Facts

- ❖ This plant adapts better to very acidic soils
- ❖ There are 100-250 described species of Camellia
- ❖ We also have Yuletide Camellia located just outside the Brown Education Center and Japanese Camellia located at the exit of Natural Encounters.
- ❖ The Tea Plant is the most recognized species