

Aphrodite Althea, Rose of Sharon

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Hibiscus syriacus

- **Recommended Use:** Large shrub or small multitrunked tree for the landscape and a pollinator attractor.
- **Exposure:** Full sun to part sun
- **Size:** 8-10 feet high, 6 feet wide
- **Habit:** Upright vase shape
- **Bloom Time:** April and May
- **Maintenance Category:** Low
- **Water Use:** Moderate
- **Highlights:** Summer color, showy flowers, low maintenance, cold-hardy.



Large showy pink blooms feature a broad corolla and prominent central staminal column.

Summary

Altheas, also known as Rose of Sharon, are native to Asia and were widely planted in Europe before making their way to North America, where they have become a classic specimen in southern gardens. They are deciduous flowering shrubs, producing large summer blooms typical of the *Hibiscus* genus. Because it is low maintenance, altheas are a great way to add color to the landscape without the continual work involved with bedding plants.

Altheas thrive best in full sunlight but can tolerate some shade, preferably in the afternoon. Soil pH can range from acidic to alkaline, provided it is well drained. Other than occasional pruning to increase vigor, maintain shape and increase bloom size, little is needed to maintain altheas. Their natural growth habit is shrubby and multitrunked and can be pruned to the owner's liking as a small tree or even formed into a hedge with closer spacing (4-5 feet).

Aphrodite performs well in the Louisiana heat and humidity, with larger blooms and more dense foliage than most other altheas. The deep green foliage provides nice landscape texture, with leaves that are coarsely toothed and lobed before shedding for the winter. Large, showy blooms begin to appear in May and continue through the late summer. Like other flowers in the Malvaceae family, a broad corolla is accented with a prominent central staminal column. Aphrodite flowers can reach 5 inches in diameter and are a rosy, pink color with reddish centers and ruffled petals.



Flowers are a rosy pink color with reddish centers and ruffled petals.



Aphrodite althea is a very prolific bloomer.

Requirements

- Blooms best in full sun; can tolerate a few hours of shade.
- Prefers well-drained soils of pH 5.5 to 7.5 but can tolerate poor soils as well.
- Plant from fall to spring, while plants are dormant.
- Fertilize in late winter or early spring with a slow-release shrub/tree type fertilizer.
- Because Aphrodite is sterile, it can only be vegetatively propagated; using stem cuttings is usually easy.

Growth Habit

- Its multitrunk habit can be pruned to a single tree form or selectively pruned to a small landscape tree or large shrub. It can also be used to form hedges and borders.
- Aphrodite is slightly more compact than most altheas, typically 8 feet high and up to 6 feet wide.
- Growth is upright, rarely spreading.

Care and Maintenance

- Pruning to maintain form and remove cold-damaged wood should be done in February or March.
- Later winter pruning to reduce the number of buds per branch can increase flower size.
- Aphrodite has very few pest and disease problems, although Japanese beetles can cause significant damage.
- Cold-hardy throughout Louisiana.

For more information on Aphrodite althea and other Louisiana Super Plants, contact your local LSU AgCenter Extension office or visit LSUAgCenter.com/SuperPlants.



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