

The Chinese Pistache tree (*Pistacia chinensis*), is a drought-tolerant, ornamental shade tree. This tree does well in full sun and requires little water once established, making it a great addition to many desert landscapes. When planting a young Pistache tree, make sure you plant it in soil that can drain well. Oversaturated soil can lead to root rot.

The Chinese Pistache is known for its relatively quick growth of 2-3 feet per year, its ovular canopy and distinct foliage, and its long lifespan. At mature size, this tree reaches up to 35 feet tall and 30 feet wide! You can expect bright red blooms against the background of dark green leaves in late spring. In fall, the leaves turn a vibrant reddish orange.

Recommendations for Proper Pruning

During the tree's first year in the ground, leave as many limbs on the tree as possible. This includes those growing up and down the trunk! Young trees need as many leaves as possible to nourish themselves as they grow, and excessive pruning during this time can limit their progress.

However, there are certain situations in which light pruning may be required. Prune to remove dead or broken branches, codominant leaders (branches competing with the tallest branch of the tree), or branches touching the ground. Another occurrence that requires pruning is if branches cross each other.

During the second and third years of growth, minimal pruning can help. Trees still need the maximum amount of leaf surface to energize their growth. But as before, there are specific reasons to prune during this period.

Prune any branches that cross or touch, as branches that rub can result in open wounds that leave the tree branch susceptible to disease. You can begin removing only the bottom branches and start to thin the canopy slightly. Take out a few branches here and there so that your tree can better withstand any monsoon season winds or storms. But don't remove too much! It's important to prune judiciously, as developing a strong trunk and branch structure takes several years.



The Chinese Pistache tree's bark is smooth, and its leaves are large, dark green, and appear waxy



This tree's leaves turn red and orange in the fall

