



# Nerium oleander 'Sister Agnes' 'Sister Agnes' Oleander<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Oleander is a wonderful easy-care, rounded shrub or small tree, with long, dark green leaves and an abundance of single or double, sometimes fragrant flowers (Fig. 1). 'Sister Agnes' has single pure white flowers. Often trained into an attractive small tree, multi-branched Oleander also does well as a quick-growing screen or large specimen planting. Planted on five to seven foot centers, a row of Oleander makes a nice screen for a large residence or other large-scale landscape.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Scientific name: Nerium oleander 'Sister Agnes' Pronunciation: NEER-ee-um oh-lee-ANN-der Common name(s): 'Sister Agnes' Oleander

Family: Apocynaceae

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

Origin: not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; hedge; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; reclamation plant; screen; trainable as a standard; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

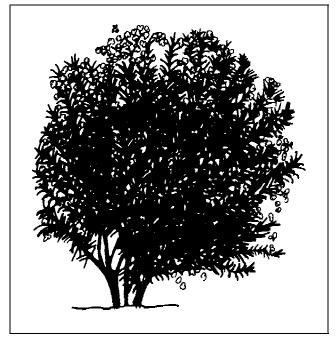


Figure 1. Middle-aged 'Sister Agnes' Oleander.

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

# **DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 10 to 18 feet **Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more

or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: round; vase shape

Crown density: moderate

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Growth rate: fast Texture: medium

# **Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite; whorled

Leaf type: simple Leaf margin: entire

**Leaf shape:** lanceolate; linear **Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen **Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change Fall characteristic: not showy

## **Flower**

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; very

showy; year round flowering (Fig. 3)

## Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter

problem

# **Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns **Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop

strong structure

**Breakage:** susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is

weak and tends to break

Current year twig color: green
Current year twig thickness: thick



Figure 3. Flower of 'Sister Agnes' Oleander.

## Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun;

tree grows in full sun

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

well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: good

## Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem Winter interest: no special winter interest Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible

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

# **USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Growing well with only one yearly fertilization and springtime pruning, Oleander is one of the easiest shrubs to care for. Sometimes suckers produced at the base of the plant will siphon off too much energy and flowering will be inhibited. These suckers should be pulled to remove them when they are young and succulent. The plant can be trained into a short central leader in the nursery and is often sold as a "standard" Oleander. It grows into a round-headed ball, flowering year-round in USDA hardiness zones 9b through 11. Flowering is reduced in winter in USDA hardiness zone 9a.

All parts of the plant are poisonous so care must be taken when locating Oleander near areas frequented by small children; burning of the trimmings will produce toxic fumes. Even chewing once or twice on a leaf or twig can send a person to the hospital.

Oleander survives drought extremely well and is well-suited to growing on soil too poor for most other plants, even tolerating salt spray, brackish water, and alkaline soil. Oleander needs full sun to perform its best, appearing too lanky and flowering little if planted in partial shade. The Oleander caterpillar can defoliate a plant within a week or two, and it is common in south and central Florida. It is commonly planted in highway medians as a no-maintenance plant. It grows in wet weather, slowing down in drought but never appears damaged by even severe drought.

Many other Oleander cultivars are available: 'Calypso' has single, cherry red flowers and is very hardy; 'Compte Barthelemy' has double red flowers; 'Mrs. Roeding', double pink flowers; 'Isle of Capri', single, light yellow flowers; 'Hawaii', single salmonpink flowers with yellow throats; and dwarf cultivars 'Petite Pink' and 'Petite Salmon'. 'Variegata' and 'Variegatum Plenum' have variegated leaves.

Propagation is by cuttings.

## **Pests**

Pest problems are scale and Oleander caterpillar which can do quite a bit of damage to the foliage if left unchecked. Oleander caterpillar can defoliate a plant in a week or two.

#### **Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern.