

# Coming Attraction:



## Cheerleader®

Hardy Orchid Tree / Desert Willow *Chilopsis linearis*

Carl Whitcomb, Lacebark Research, Stillwater, OK



### Features

- Small tree with good branch structure
- Tricolor flowers: dark purple, white, light purple
- Very drought / heat tolerant
- Widely adaptable, Zones 5+ / 6 to 10+. Needs heat to flower
- No powdery mildew leaf drop
- Sterile / no seed pods / repeat blooms
- Dark green foliage **all season**



### History

The small tree is native to far Southwest U.S., thus the name, desert willow, most likely because it was thought that was only place where it would grow. Endemic Powdery Mildew was causing leaf drop, thereby starving the trees growing outside low humidity deserts.

Having long admired flowers and foliage in spring only to see them drop in early summer with high humidity, my goal was to find a permanent fix. Starting in 1986 seedlings were grown, looking for resistance. None were found from 1986 to 1996. I set aside the search, then picked it back up in 2011. A few trees had finally shown resistance to the pathogen. Seedlings planted summer 2022 were mostly resistant, but it was a warm dry summer. 2024 and 2025 were very humid with moderate temperatures. Finally, a highly disease-resistant tree was found.

*When seeds do not develop, near base of flower spike, new vegetative shoots emerge.*

