

# Lady Bug<sup>®</sup>

Althea, Shrub Althea, or Rose-Of-Sharon

*Hibiscus syriacus*, 'Whit XXI' cultivar. PP31721

Another Play It Again<sup>®</sup>, **Seedless** - Reblooming Landscape Plant, Oklahoma Tough<sup>®</sup>.

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Althea, rose-of-sharon is another plant native to China that does well over a wide range of North America in zones 5-9. There are hundreds of cultivars of althea, and most become tall, brushy plants with foliage that yellows in summer and fall, and many produce lots of short lived flowers with viable seeds and become weedy.



Lady Bug<sup>®</sup> has better manners compared to other altheas. Lady Bug<sup>®</sup> is a new semi-dwarf cultivar that grows slowly in a dense broadly-upright form and af-

ter enough years may reach a height of six to ten feet. Lady Bug<sup>®</sup> produces huge quantities of flowers over 100 days under Oklahoma conditions, or more where conditions are favorable. The 3.5 to 4 inch flowers begin as large buds with sepals covering developing flower petals. As the petals extend above the sepals, distinct bright red blotches develop on the exposed petals. But fully opened flowers are entirely a soft pink, since the red blotches are now on the backs of the outside row of petals. Lady Bug<sup>®</sup> does not produce seeds, and as a result flowers remain showy for about 2.5 days with no troubling seeds and no unsightly seed pods. Foliage remains green throughout the growing season. Lady Bug<sup>®</sup> althea should have a place in every garden as they are amazing show-offs.

Lady Bug<sup>®</sup> is easy to propagate from softwood cuttings and flowers well, even in a one gallon container. Typical flowers of althea cultivars or seedlings open in the morning and begin to become less attractive or drop by late afternoon after being pollinated. By contrast, Lady Bug<sup>®</sup> flowers open in morning, stay attractive the full day and do not fall until the next afternoon, creating a great flower show during evening hours. During 28 years of breeding althea, no disease or insect problems have been observed. Lady Bug<sup>®</sup> grows well in most soils, even where drainage is marginal. Since althea flower on new growth, the more growth = more flowers. This is also advantageous in that if the top is killed by cold or some other hazard, or the plant gets too large, simply cut off the top and with the resumption of new growth in spring, flowering progresses normally.

