

## *Catalpa/Chilopsis/XChitalpa*—

*Catalpa* is a genus of 11 species of trees native to North America and Asia in the family known as Bignoniaceae. A number of species is cultivated. The name *Catalpa* is apparently a mistranslation from the Indian name “Catawba” for trees known as a tribal totem for the Catawba nation of Native Americans who live in the Eastern US. These species are fast growing deciduous trees with large, heart-shaped leaves. Due to the large leaves and highly branched nature of the canopy, they produce very dense shade. Large trumpet-shaped white flowers, speckled with magenta, are clustered on terminal inflorescences in the late spring and produce long, slender, pendant, bean-like pods in late summer. The Southern *Catalpa* (*Catalpa bignonioides*) and Northern *Catalpa* (*Catalpa speciosa*) are planted extensively outside their native ranges as ornamentals. The two species look very similar, but *C. speciosa* is bigger than *C. bignonioides*. Another species native to the West Indies, *C. longissima* is less commonly planted, but has potential in the Southern California landscape due to its smaller size and adaptation to a warm, seasonally dry climate. It has smaller, pink to white flowers and narrower leaves.

Other related trees include *Chilopsis linearis*, the Desert *Catalpa*, which is native to desert washes of California, Texas and Mexico, and *XChitalpa tashkentensis*, an intergeneric hybrid between two American species, *Chitalpa bignonioides* and *Chilopsis linearis*. Oddly enough, this sterile hybrid was made in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and was imported into the US by the New York Botanical Garden.

Sixteen *Catalpa* trees were planted by VAF volunteers between Steward and Boundary on November 15th, 2008. *XChitalpa* can be seen between Hill and Madison and in the Dr. Lewis Garden at Jane St.



Above—*Catalpa*; Below—*XChitalpa*

