Cassia and Senna

Family: Fabaceae (Pea)
Cassia – ~30 known
• Evergreen, partially evergreen, and deciduous trees
• Native to many lands, generally warm
• Summer blooms are bright, showy, and a shade of yellow, but can be pink or white
• Summer fruit produce seed pods which fall to the ground
• Best grown in well-drained soil in full sun
Senna – ~260 known

- Evergreen, semi-evergreen plants, shrubs, and trees
- Native to South America and other temperate regions
- Summer blooms are generally yellow and many have showy flowers
- Summer fruits appear as seed pods
- Best grown in well-drained soil and full sun
- Medicinal uses, among others, include herbalism, hair treatments, and laxatives
Gold Medallion Tree – *Cassia leptophylla*
• Brought to Southern California about 80 years ago from Brazil
• Introduced by the Los Angeles County Arboretum’s plant introduction programs in 1960s and 70s
• Favored by landscapers for the following reasons:
  • Fast growing rate—can reach 25 feet tall and 30 feet wide
  • Ability to withstand hot temperatures and 32F+
  • Relatively drought tolerant
  • Incredible showy yellow summer blossoms that cover tree
• Essentially an evergreen with dense, dark leaves
• Each leaf has nine to fourteen 2-3 inch long elliptical, pointed leaflets
• Summer blooms produce clusters of flowers that look like a “medallion”
• Flowering is followed by foot-long dark brown seedpods that drop to the ground
• Best pruning is in fall following the flower and seedpod drop
• Yes, messy
Crown of Gold – *Senna spectabilis*
• Known as *Cassia excels*, *C. carnival*, and *C. spectabilis* prior to 1980s
• In 1982 *Cassia* genus split into 30 *Cassia* species, about 260 *Senna* species, and about 270 *Chamaecrista* species
• You can still find references to Crown of Gold as part of the *Cassia* group if you look it up online
• Native to Argentina, leaves are longer than Gold Medallion, carry twice the leaflets, which have tiny spines at an indented tip
• Blooms appear late summer into fall and produce foot-long clusters of yellow flowers
• The foot-long green pods drop to the ground after flowering
• Temperature, water, soil, and pruning are similar to the Gold Medallion tree
• Yes, messy
Uses in the landscape

• Because of drought tolerance and showy blooms, these two trees are favored with civic landscapers for parking lots, parks, and other commercial purposes
• Can also be used as a patio tree and for other residential purposes
• Both attract butterflies, birds, and hummingbirds
• Crown of Gold has been labeled an invasive plant in certain areas of Africa, the island of O’ahu in Hawaii, and French Polynesia as, if left un-checked, can choke out native plants as it plentifully reseeds
Your choice?

- Gold Medallion
- Crown of Gold