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Cercis

Leguminosae

[*Caesalpiniaceae/Fabaceae*]

Cercis is derived from a Greek name *kerkis* for some authorities given to a European species of poplar – and also to a tree in this genus (Judas tree *Cercis siliquastrum*) that is native to Judaea in the Middle East.

The latter European species was known in France as *l'arbre de Judée* (tree from Judaea). Some authorities suggest that this French name may have contributed to a confusion that led to today's traditional English name for the tree, 'Judas tree' ie. the tree on which Judas hanged himself in the 1st Century.

Members of this family absorb nitrogen from the air. Through the bacterial nodules on their deep growing roots, they will introduce nitrogen to the soil (and aerate it), to the benefit of neighbouring plants and any following them in the same soil.