

# *Nerium oleander*

**Common name:** Nerium, Oleander, Kaner

**Family:** Apocynaceae

**Habit:** Shrub

**Location:** Science Block and Botanical Garden

**Distribution:** It is a shrub or small tree cultivated worldwide in temperate and subtropical areas as an ornamental and landscaping plant. It is so widely cultivated that no precise region of origin has been identified, though it is usually associated with the Mediterranean Basin.

## **Description:**

Oleander grows to 2–6 metres (7–20 feet) tall, with erect stems that splay outward as they mature; first-year stems have a glaucous bloom, while mature stems have a grayish bark. The leaves are in pairs or whorls of three, thick and leathery, dark-green, narrow lanceolate, 5–21 cm long and 1–3.5 cm broad, and with an entire margin filled with minute reticulate venation web typical of eudicots. The leaves are light green and very glossy when young, maturing to a dull dark green. The flowers grow in clusters at the end of each branch; they are white, pink to red, 2.5–5 cm (1–2 in) diameter, with a deeply 5-lobed fringed corolla round the central corolla tube. They are often, but not always, sweet-scented. The fruit is a long narrow pair of follicles 5–23 cm (2–9 in) long, which splits open at maturity to release numerous downy seeds.

## **Uses:**

Oleander is a vigorous grower in warm subtropical regions, where it is extensively used as an ornamental plant in parks, along roadsides and in private gardens. Its use as a poison is well known. Despite the danger, oleander seeds and leaves are used to make medicine. Oleander is used for heart conditions, asthma, epilepsy, cancer, painful menstrual periods, leprosy, malaria, ringworm, indigestion, and venereal disease; and to cause abortions.

