TREES



Trees are extremely versatile and valuable plants, playing a role in many important landscape functions. They help create privacy and provide a backdrop for a home or other plants. Trees provide permanent structure to a design and establish the scale of the landscape. A selection of large trees, planted in the right locations, create a landscape's framework. Small trees, shrubs and vines and other plants play supporting roles. Perhaps most important in the desert, trees provide shade, cooling homes and outdoor living areas.

Most trees require several years to reach maturity, so select and locate them carefully. Make doubly sure there is enough space for their mature height and width. Be particularly aware of the mature height of trees if utility lines are near your home, restricting the space above them.

Photo above: *Prosopis* hybrid.

Acacia species

Acacia

Acacias are native to regions all around the globe. With almost 1,000 species, a wide variety of forms, textures and colors are available, including both evergreen and deciduous plants. Acacias are tolerant of heat and most are low to moderate water users. Provide trees with deep, infrequent irrigations to help establish root systems. Flowers are individually tiny but are clustered into puffballs or long drooping flowerheads called catkins.

Acacia aneura



MULGA

Evergreen and thornless, mulga grows slowly to 20 feet high and 15 to 20 feet wide. Small, narrow, silvery gray leaves are leathery, similar to those of an olive tree and are dense along the branches. Makes a fine windbreak and screen. The yellow catkin flowers are heaviest during late spring into summer. Native to Australia. Canopy coverage: 314 square feet.



Mulga, *Acacia aneura*.

Acacia berlandieri



GUAJILLO

Like many native American acacias, the light green leaves of guajillo are delicate and appear almost fernlike. This evergreen tree grows at a moderate rate from 10 to 15 feet high and 12 feet wide. Fragrant, cream-colored, puffball flowers bloom in tune with spring weather. Plant in well drained soil. Smallish thorns are usually not a serious hazard. Gradually prune lower branches if your goal is to develop a small tree. Native to southern Texas and Mexico. Canopy coverage: 113 square feet.



Guajillo, *Acacia berlandieri*.

Acacia craspedocarpa



LEATHERLEAF ACACIA

Grows slowly from 10 to 15 feet high and 8 feet wide with a rounded crown. Evergreen with rounded, upright, gray-green leaves. Yellow puffball flowers bloom spring to summer. Prune into a tree or leave shrubby as an alternative to oleander. Effective as a screen. Native to Australia. Canopy coverage: 50 square feet.



Leatherleaf acacia, *Acacia craspedocarpa*.

Acacia farnesiana

SWEET ACACIA

(Acacia smallii, A. minuta). This is a medium, open, multi-trunk tree with vaselike form, fernlike leaves, small thorns and fragrant flowers. Deciduous to semi-deciduous, it grows at a moderate rate from 20 to 25 feet high and as wide. Yellow puffball flowers are profuse in spring and produce a wonderful sweet fragrance. Avoid heavy pruning because it leads to problematic suckers. Native to Mexico. Canopy coverage: 314 square feet.

Acacia greggii

CATCLAW ACACIA

This acacia can be trained to become a tree or shrub, growing slowly up to 12 feet high and as wide. The amount of water it receives has a direct affect on its form. In a natural environment, catclaw acacias growing alongside desert washes are often treelike. Receiving less water in the wild or a home landscape causes plants to take on shrublike forms. The finely divided leaves are gray-green; plants are semi-deciduous. Cream-colored flower spikes appear in spring and are fragrant. Branches are armed with short, curved thorns, thus its common name. Native to the U.S. Southwest and Mexico. Canopy coverage: 113 square feet.



Sweet acacia, *Acacia farnesiana*.

Acacia rigidula

BLACKBRUSH ACACIA

A slow-growing small tree or large shrub reaching 15 feet high and as wide. Tolerates heat and drought, but will also accept moist conditions, such as near lawns. The smooth, gray bark contrasts nicely against glossy green leaves that are cold deciduous. Long catkins of cream-colored flowers bloom in spring. Some plants have thorns. Native to Chihuahuan Desert. Canopy coverage: 177 square feet.



Catclaw acacia, *Acacia greggii*.



Blackbrush acacia, *Acacia rigidula*.

Acacia salicina

WILLOW ACACIA



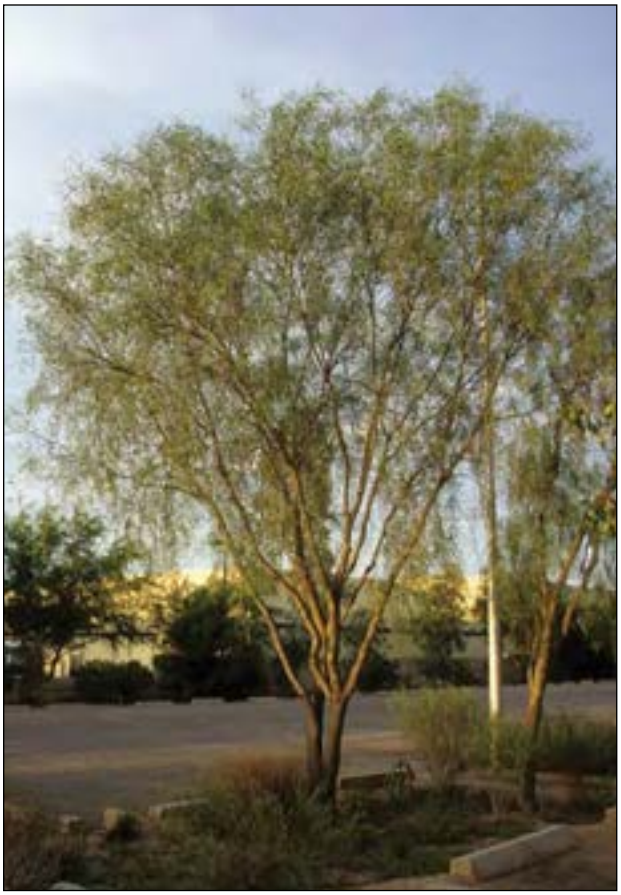
A low-water and enduring alternative to weeping willow, which is short-lived in desert regions. Graceful, pendulous evergreen leaves on trees that grow rapidly from 20 to 40 feet high, spreading 10 to 20 feet wide. Creamy white puffball flowers bloom late summer into winter. Water deeply and well away from the trunk to avoid blow over during windstorms. Native to Australia. Canopy coverage: 177 square feet.

Acacia stenophylla

SHOESTRING ACACIA



Strong, vertical and graceful, rapidly reaching 25 to 30 feet high yet spreading only 15 to 20 feet wide. This is an ideal tree for narrow spaces. Long, stringlike, light gray-green, evergreen leaves up to 4 inches long hang from its branches. It's a clean tree that does not produce much litter—useful around pool and patio areas. Do not plant in lawns. Native to Australia. Canopy coverage: 314 square feet.



Willow acacia, *Acacia salicina*.



Shoestring acacia, *Acacia stenophylla*.

Acacia willardiana

PALO BLANCO



With delicate, papery white bark, weeping branches, fine leaves and airy form, this small acacia provides an elegant touch. Grows at a moderate rate, reaching 20 feet high and spreading to 10 feet wide. Its open form allows planting of sun-loving shrubs and perennials below it. Accepts heat, even reflected heat of south-facing walls. Native to subtropical Sonora, Mexico. Canopy coverage: 79 square feet.



Palo blanco, *Acacia willardiana*.

Albizia julibrissin



SILK TREE, MIMOSA TREE

A deciduous tree that grows rapidly from 25 to 35 feet high and 35 to 40 feet wide. Develops a wide canopy with graceful, light green, feathery foliage. Best to stake young trees to develop form. Produces an abundance of rich pink, silky flowers in summer and sporadically at other times of the year. As flowers and pods drop, they create a lot of litter. A nice tree to view from above. Occasional deep watering is essential, otherwise, the tree is typically short-lived. Native to Asia. Canopy coverage: 1,257 square feet.



Silk tree, *Albizia julibrissin*.

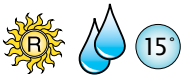
Bauhinia blakeana



HONG KONG ORCHID TREE

Grows at a moderate rate from 15 to 20 feet high and as wide. Abundant maroon to pink flowers bloom from December to April, and are quite dramatic in size and color. Deep water at drip line of tree about once each week in summer. Plant in well drained soil. Native to China. Canopy coverage: 314 square feet.

Bauhinia lunarioides



WHITE ORCHID TREE

(Bauhinia congesta). Another common name for this plant is Chihuahuan orchid shrub. It can be pruned into a small tree but usually is more shrublike, growing slowly to 10 feet high and to 6 feet wide. Produces large clusters of fragrant, white or pink flowers in spring. Water deeply every two to three weeks during summer. Native to Chihuahuan Desert. Canopy coverage: 28 square feet.

Bauhinia variegata



PURPLE ORCHID TREE

(Bauhinia purpurea). Grows at a moderate to rapid rate to form a dense crown, reaching 25 to 30 feet high with an equal spread. Leaves are medium green. Profuse magenta to purple flowers cover the branches in late winter. White-flowering forms are available. Mature trees can be seen throughout the Coachella Valley. Native to India and China. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.



Hong Kong orchid tree, *Bauhinia blakeana*.



White orchid tree, *Bauhinia lunarioides*.



Purple orchid tree, *Bauhinia variegata*.

Bismarckia nobilis

BISMARCK PALM



This dramatic palm will catch your eye for at least two reasons: the large, striking, light blue to blue-green fronds, and its impressive mature size: 40 feet high and 20 feet wide. Another factor is the symmetry of the palm's broad crown, which makes it a focal point in the landscape. It is a clean poolside plant, evoking a tropical mood. Plan ahead for the mature size—it is not a plant for a small garden. Accepts some shade. Native to the island of Madagascar. Canopy coverage: 314 square feet.

Brahea armata

MEXICAN BLUE PALM



Grows slowly from 20 to 30 feet high, spreading only 8 to 10 feet wide, making it well-suited to small gardens. Icy blue, fan-shaped fronds are an attractive feature. Use as an accent or blend with other silvery-leaved plants. Low litter plant, good near pools. Mature plants feature creamy flower clusters 6 to 10 feet long in summer. Native to Baja California. Canopy coverage: 79 square feet.

Brahea edulis

GUADALUPE ISLAND PALM



This fan palm grows slowly to 30 feet high and spreads to about 10 feet at maturity, with light green, fan-shaped fronds. An ideal palm accent in small areas or around pools; it can take extreme heat and reflected light. Provide deep irrigations monthly during summer heat. Native to Guadalupe Islands in Baja California. Canopy coverage: 79 square feet.



Mexican blue palm, *Brahea armata.*

Butia capitata

PINDO PALM



(Cocos australis). Accepts frost and extreme heat and sun—hardships of every kind. Grows slowly 10 to 20 feet high with an equal spread. Gray-green, feathery leaves are long and graceful. Uniquely rugged trunk shows off the former leaf bases, helping making this palm an ideal accent plant. Apply nitrogen fertilizer to the soil if leaves yellow. Native to Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. Canopy coverage: 314 square feet.

Caesalpinia cacalaco

CASCALOTE



An attractive, vase-shaped small tree, growing at a moderate rate to 15 feet high and almost as wide. Spikes of clear yellow flowers bloom at the branch tips late winter into early spring. Flowers can be damaged by late frosts; avoid by planting in a protected location. Luxuriant foliage is armed with rose-sized thorns, so place away from pedestrian traffic. A thornless selection, Smoothie®, is available. Watch for psyllid pests in spring; preventative treatment is available. Prune after the flowering season ends to control ungainly growth. Native to Vera Cruz, Mexico. Canopy coverage: 177 square feet.



Pindo palm, *Butia capitata.*



Cascalote, *Caesalpinia cacalaco.*

Callistemon viminalis



WEEPING BOTTLEBRUSH

This is an attractive small tree that grows at a moderate rate from 20 to 30 feet high with a 15-foot spread. A freely branching evergreen, it has pendulous branches that become covered with magnificent, red, bottlebrush flowers midspring and summer. Do not plant in lawns—the roots do not like to be that moist. Also avoid windy locations. Attracts butterflies and hummingbirds. Native to Australia. Canopy coverage: 177 square feet.

Also consider *Callistemon citrinus,* which is a similar tree but with a less weeping form.

Cercis occidentalis



WESTERN REDBUD

Grow western redbud as a tree or shrub. It is deciduous, and grows at a fast rate to 15 feet high with an equal width. Established plants are cold hardy, but young plants may need protection when temperatures drop below 20°F their first few years. Pea-shaped magenta flowers bloom early in spring even before the heart-shaped leaves emerge. Flowering is better when winter cold drops below 28 degrees. Native to Arizona, California and Utah. Canopy coverage: 177 square feet.



Weeping bottlebrush, *Callistemon viminalis*.

Chamaerops humilis



MEDITERRANEAN FAN PALM

This is a slow-growing, multitrunked fan palm. Dwarfish in habit, it is a fine palm for a small yard. Attains height of 10 to 12 feet at maturity and about 8 feet in width. Growth is more rapid with regular water and fertilizer during the warm season. Leaves are small and abundant, the *petioles* (see page 154) armed with sharp spines. Plants may sucker freely, spreading to form a dense clump. A handsome tub plant or a featured plant near pools. Native to the Mediterranean and north Africa. Canopy coverage: 50 square feet.



Western redbud, *Cercis occidentalis*.



Mediterranean fan palm, *Chamaerops humilis*.

Chilopsis linearis



DESERT WILLOW

This light, airy, 25- to 30-foot deciduous tree is perfect for locations where you need summer shade but want winter sun, such as on the south side of the house or patio. Graceful, light green leaves provide a splendid backdrop to clusters of large, orchidlike flowers that come in shades of white, pink, red and purple. Many horticultural varieties of this lovely tree are now available, including some that flower spring and summer. Do any corrective pruning during the deciduous period—December into February. Prune lightly to control growth, create new flowering wood and to display the handsome, smooth, gray trunks. Native to arroyos in Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts. Canopy coverage: 314 square feet.

Chitalpa X tashkentensis



CHITALPA

This tree is a hybrid from Russia that is a cross of two genera, *Chilopsis linearis* and *Catalpa bignonioides*. Chitalpa combines some of the best characteristics of both plants. It is more evergreen and has larger, more vivid, white or pink flower clusters compared to its parents. Mature size of 20 to 30 feet high and as wide still allows its use in most gardens. Accepts partial shade. Availability at nurseries may be limited, but worth the search. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.



Chitalpa, *Chitalpa* X *tashkentensis*.



Desert willow, *Chilopsis linearis*.

Chorisia speciosa



SILK FLOSS TREE, KAPOK

Silk floss tree is also called the drunkard's tree, because a mature tree looks like a giant, lime green Chianti bottle topped with spreading boughs. Trunk has distinctive thorns. In fall, profuse numbers of large, rose- to wine-colored flowers appear, followed by seedpods filled with white, cottony kapok, once used to fill life vests. Trees can reach 30 to 50 feet high and spread 25 to 30 feet, sometimes much more, so they're not a good choice for a small lot. Occasionally becomes deciduous prior to bloom period. Avoid windy locations and water deeply at the drip line. Native to Brazil and Argentina. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.



Silk floss tree, *Chorisia speciosa*.

Cupressus arizonica

ARIZONA CYPRESS



This is a superior, medium-sized evergreen for use as a windbreak or tall screen in low-maintenance situations. Grows at a moderate rate from 30 to 40 feet high and to 20 feet wide with a pyramidal form. Gray-green, scalelike foliage varies from plant to plant. Branches have a distinct whipcord texture. Thrives in low-rainfall areas after it is established. Resistant to cypress canker. 'Gareei' is a grafted selection, which means plants will consistently have rich, silvery, blue-green foliage. 'Blue Ice' features silvery blue foliage. 'Compacta' has a more compact growth form.

Note that *Cupressus arizonica* often goes by the name rough-barked Arizona cypress, and *C. glabra* is known as smooth-barked Arizona cypress. Rough-barked Arizona cypress tends to perform better in the Coachella Valley. Canopy coverage: 314 square feet.



Arizona cypress, *Cupressus arizonica.*

Cupressus sempervirens

ITALIAN CYPRESS



This tall, vertical accent tree is often used in formal landscapes. It is propagated by cuttings rather than grown from seed to reproduce its desired qualities. The distinctive, narrow, dense columnar form reaches 20 to 60 feet high, spreading to just 8 feet wide. 'Glauca' has attractive, bluish green, juniperlike foliage. 'Stricta' is similar in form and size with dark green foliage.

Red spidermites can attack plants in summer and may even kill drought-stressed trees. Water deeply every three weeks to help avoid this problem, and treat mites when they appear. Native to the Mediterranean. Canopy coverage: 50 square feet.



Italian cypress, *Cupressus sempervirens.*

Dalbergia sissoo

INDIAN ROSEWOOD



This is a moderately fast-growing shade tree that generally reaches 40 feet high and 30 wide, or much larger with optimum conditions. Evergreen to cold-deciduous with below-freezing temperatures, but recovers quickly in spring. Bright, glossy green leaves cover a rounded crown. Wide-spreading roots help stabilize erosion-prone banks and slopes but suckering along the roots can be an issue; tree roots can also be invasive. Native to India. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.



Indian rosewood, *Dalbergia sissoo.*

Ebenopsis ebano

TEXAS EBONY

(Pithecellobium flexicaule). The dense, dark green leaves and spiny twigs of Texas ebony can develop into a great security barrier. Even without a utilitarian use in mind, its picturesque form makes this a desirable tree for a small garden. Avoid planting near walkways or other pedestrian traffic areas due to its small, sharp thorns. A slow grower, the mature height is 20 to 30 feet with a spread of 15 to 20 feet, but this takes many years. Fragrant, cream-colored flowers add color in late spring and are followed by large, decorative, woody, seedpods. May be susceptible to borer damage; keep a watchful eye on trees. Native to Texas and New Mexico. Canopy coverage: 314 square feet.

Elaeocarpus decipiens

JAPANESE BLUEBERRY TREE

A large, evergreen tree that evokes a subtropical mood, reaching 30 to 40 feet high and almost as wide. Accepts some afternoon shade. Creates a fair amount of litter, so not a poolside tree. The small, fragrant, white to cream flowers are borne in clusters late spring to summer. Leaves 3 to 5 inches long are bronzy color when new, then turn dark green, and then turn orange or red prior to dropping. Blue-black, olivelike berries follow. Native to China and Japan. Canopy coverage: 1,257 square feet.



Texas ebony, *Ebenopsis ebano.*



Japanese blueberry tree, *Elaeocarpus decipiens.*

Eucalyptus species

EUCALYPTUS

Selecting eucalyptus for a home landscape requires careful planning, because many species grow to 60 feet or even higher—much too large for most residences. Be particularly careful when selecting trees if power lines are part of your lot. Encourage deep, wide-spreading roots with deep and wide irrigations, ideally with drip irrigation, or slow-soak with a garden hose.



Silver dollar tree, *Eucalyptus cinerea.*

Eucalyptus cinerea



SILVER DOLLAR TREE

This is a medium-to-large tree from 20 to 50 feet high and 25 feet wide. It has a tendency to form multiple trunks, which make it attractive when viewed as a silhouette. Gray-green, rounded leaves grow as opposites along the stems. Juvenile leaves are excellent for cut foliage in flower arrangements. Tolerates wind, and can be planted 10 to 15 feet apart as a windbreak. Accepts lawn conditions. Canopy coverage: 491 square feet.

Eucalyptus microtheca



COOLIBAH

Graceful tree from 20 to 40 feet high and 25 feet wide, but tends to take on a leaning posture unless staked when young. Best results occur when trained as a single trunk. Trunks of older trees eventually become brown and corky. Can be used as a windbreak; branches are somewhat less fragile than other species. Canopy coverage: 491 square feet.

Eucalyptus papuana



GHOST GUM

Grow this stately eucalyptus for its notable, smooth, snowy white trunk. Grows at a moderate rate, reaching from 20 to 60 feet high and 15 to 30 feet wide, often with multiple trunks. Leaves are leathery, gray to medium green, and pendulous, making it a good specimen tree for the landscape. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.

Eucalyptus spathulata



SWAMP MALLEE

Evergreen, compact and handsome, with multiple trunks, also known as swamp mallet. Smooth, reddish to tan, peeling bark adds a sculptural quality. Grows at a moderate rate 15 to 30 feet high with an equal spread. Graceful, ribbonlike leaves 2 to 3 inches long are grayish green. Makes an excellent screen or windbreak. Its size, color and texture allow swamp mallee to blend better with desert vegetation than most other eucalyptus. Tolerates salty, poor soil, and can be planted near lawns. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.

Fraxinus uhdei 'Majestic Beauty'



MAJESTIC BEAUTY ASH, EVERGREEN ASH

Vigorous growth, reaching 50 to 60 feet high with 50-foot spread. Strong branching habit. Exceptionally large, compound, glossy, dark green leaves add splendor to this medium-sized, round-headed tree. Evergreen but becomes deciduous when temperatures drop below 30°F. More uniform growth than other ashes and more cold tolerant, but leaves may burn if subjected to hot winds. Deep irrigation helps reduce surface rooting. Parent stock native to streamsides in Mexico. Canopy coverage: 1,963 square feet.



Coolibah, *Eucalyptus microtheca.*



Ghost gum, *Eucalyptus papuana.*



Swamp mallee, *Eucalyptus spathulata.*

Geijera parviflora

AUSTRALIAN WILLOW

This evergreen, graceful, fine-textured tree grows at a moderate rate, reaching 15 to 25 feet high and 15 to 20 feet wide. Rounded to pyramidal in form, it remains small enough for patios. Plant it for the weeping willow appearance created by the medium green, strap-shaped leaves. Uniform growth at a moderate rate can be accelerated with additional water. Good soil drainage is essential. Native to Australia. Canopy coverage: 314 square feet.

Havardia mexicana

MEXICAN EBONY

(Pithecellobium mexicanum). Lovely, smooth, gray bark and a naturally rounded form make this a great addition to the landscape. A moderately fast grower, it reaches up to 30 feet high and as wide but is usually much smaller in a low desert climate. Its fine-textured, gray-green foliage is cold deciduous. Creamy yellow puffball flowers appear in spring, followed by ornate woody brown pods. Native to Sonora and Baja California. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.

Jacaranda mimosifolia

JACARANDA

(Jacaranda acutifolia). This is an eye-catching, round-headed, semievergreen tree that grows at a moderate to rapid rate 30 to 50 feet high and 15 to 30 feet wide.



Australian willow, *Geijera parviflora*.

Best for parks, commercial use or large residences due to its size. You'll notice it in May and June: Lacy, fern-like, green leaves and large clusters of attractive, lavender-blue flowers bloom in profusion. As flowers drop, they produce a fair amount of litter, so select location with this in mind. Plant in soil with good drainage. Water deeply to reduce development of surface roots but do not overwater. Water weekly in growing season, but only once or twice during dormant winter period. Produces suckers if pruned too heavy. Native to Brazil. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.



Mexican ebony, *Havardia mexicana*.



Jacaranda, *Jacaranda mimosifolia*.

Koelreuteria paniculata



GOLDENRAIN TREE

The open, branching form of goldenrain tree produces light shade. It is deciduous, growing to 35 feet high and as wide, likely smaller in the low desert. The yellow flowers are tiny but profuse, blooming in early summer. Papery fruit capsules follow; they are light green then turn brown, lasting into fall. Native to China and Korea. Canopy coverage: 962 square feet.

Also consider *Koelreuteria bipinnata,* Chinese flame tree, similar in size and appearance. Summer flowers are yellow, followed by pods that change from a creamy white to shades of orange and red. Native to China.

Lagerstroemia indica



CRAPE MYRTLE

Vigorous deciduous tree or shrub that offers year-round interest, admired for its striking clusters of flowers that bloom summer into fall. Can be trained to become a quality tree to 25 feet high and 20 feet wide. Foliage turns bright shades of orange, yellow or red in fall. After leaves drop, the satiny, pale, sculptural bark adds close-up interest. Avoid planting in lawn areas, which can cause plants to develop mildew problems, as will excessive humidity. Many hybrids and cultivars are available in a range of flower colors, including white, pink, red, magenta, lavender and purple. Native to China. Canopy coverage: 314 square feet.

Leucaena retusa



GOLDEN LEADBALL TREE

A deciduous tree or large shrub to 20 feet high and 15 feet wide. A primary attraction are the spring and summer flowers—yellow-gold balls about 1 inch in diameter hang on the branches like ornaments. Bright green, delicate, lacy leaves give it a subtropical effect. Accepts some shade. Drought tolerant but better appearance with additional summer water. Native to Chihuahuan Desert. Canopy coverage: 177 square feet.



Goldenrain tree, *Koelreuteria paniculata.*



Crape myrtle, *Lagerstroemia indica.*



Golden leadball tree, *Leucaena retusa.*

Lysiloma watsonii var. thornberi



FEATHER TREE

(Lysiloma microphylla var. *thornberi).* Finely divided, fernlike foliage provides a lush, tropical effect. Creates dappled shade—ideal for perennials and small shrubs beneath. By the time plants are 6 to 10 years old, the multitrunk growth can reach 15 to 20 feet, spreading to 15 feet wide. After a spring show of creamy white, puffball flowers, seedpods are numerous enough to create litter in early summer, but are easy to remove. Avoid pruning large branches in summer. Plant in full sun in soil with good drainage. Overwatering during summer can create chlorotic conditions. It can freeze to the ground, but will regrow, usually becoming a large shrub. Be aware plants reseed. Native to Sonora, Mexico. Canopy coverage: 177 square feet.

Melaleuca quinquenervia



CAJEPUT TREE

Slender, vertical, evergreen tree from 20 to 35 feet high, spreading 10 to 15 feet wide. Bark is white to light brown, thick, and corky in texture and peels off the trunk in spongy sheets. Rich green foliage is graceful, thickly covering the branches. Thin branches as necessary as the tree ages, but do not top. Stands up to strong winds. Slender spikes of creamy white flowers adorn branches in summer. Water deeply to encourage deep rooting. Accepts some shade. Native to Australia. Canopy coverage: 177 square feet.

A related species, *Melaleuca alternifolia,* is the source of "tea tree oil."



Cajeput tree, *Melaleuca quinquenervia.*



Feather tree, *Lysiloma watsonii* var. *thornberi.*

Olea europaea



FRUITLESS OLIVE

Olive is a time-honored, quality, evergreen tree with an informal, picturesque growth habit. Grows at slow to moderate rate 20 to 30 feet high and as wide, as a standard form, or with multiple trunks. With time, trunks become gnarled, adding to the tree's character. Distinctive, narrow, gray-green leaves reach up to 3 inches long. Olive fruit can be a problem, littering and staining pavement. Pollen production also affects many people with allergies. 'Swan Hill' and 'Wilsonii' are fruitless selections.

Accepts low water applications, but additional moisture produces a more handsome tree. Avoid heavy pruning, especially late spring through summer, which can allow sun to burn the trunk. Keep branches on lower trunks for shade. If trees are pruned up, they will sucker profusely to shade themselves. (Pull off suckers rather than pruning them.) Olives accept almost any soil and endure heat, cold and wind. Native to the Mediterranean. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.



Fruitless olive, *Olea europaea.*

Olneya tesota
DESERT IRONWOOD



Just as olive trees create a focal point in the landscape, desert ironwood possesses a similar regal presence, with gray-green foliage and gray trunks with real character. Lavender, pealike flowers give trees an otherworldly glow in April and May, attracting bees in abundance. Slow growing from 25 to 30 feet high and as wide. It requires some patience but the reward of a quality, long-lived tree is worth the wait. Small but sharp thorns on branches can be a safety hazard near walkways as well as when pruning trees. Requires well-drained soil. Native to the Sonoran Desert. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.



Desert ironwood, *Olneya tesota*.

Parkinsonia species
Palo Verde

(Cercidium species). These American desert natives add their own personalities to a landscape scene. Formerly classified as *Cercidium, Parkinsonia* are easily recognized due to their blue-green to green bark, naturally occurring multiple trunks and distinctive elegance. Most are wide spreading from 25 to 35 feet with a similar height, which varies according to the species, moisture and soil type. Masses of yellow flowers cover the trees in April and early May. All tolerate extremes of heat, sun and soil type, although they do best in well-drained soils.

Parkinsonia florida
BLUE PALO VERDE



Blue palo verde is one of the most colorful desert trees. The strong, multitrunk form grows rapidly, developing a spreading canopy to 35 feet high and 30 feet wide, producing filtered shade. Luxuriant, golden yellow flowers appear in profusion March into April. Bark is a striking bluish green. With age, the main trunk darkens to brown. Encourage its natural, angular form and avoid pruning heavily at any one time, which can interrupt growth patterns. Native to the Sonoran Desert. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.



Blue palo verde, *Parkinsonia florida*.



Parkinsonia hybrid 'Desert Museum'.

Parkinsonia hybrid 'Desert Museum'

DESERT MUSEUM PALO VERDE

This improved and popular *Parkinsonia* is a result of hybridizing work involving *P. florida, P. microphyllum* and *P. aculata* at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson. Growth pattern of thornless ascending branches produces a substantial structure and strong vertical form. Plants are fast growing, reaching 25 to 30 feet high with a 20- to 25-foot spread. It would definitely make the Star Performer list, except for the tendency of strong winds breaking its limbs. Planting in a protected location offers some prevention. Flowers are rich yellow and are quite profuse during peak spring bloom. It also flowers sporadically during summer with supplemental irrigation. Best planted in deep soil. Canopy coverage: 368 square feet.

Parkinsonia microphylla

FOOTHILLS PALO VERDE, LITTLE LEAF PALO VERDE

Bark is a distinctive lime-green. It grows slowly to 20 feet high and about 15 feet wide, with a more diminutive and stiffer appearance compared to *Parkinsonia florida*. Tree is semi-deciduous—leaflets drop in cold or drought. Yellow flowers appear April into May. Its slow growth rate can be accelerated by supplying additional moisture. Twiggy growth and low canopy provide shelter for wildlife, which also makes it a fine choice as a background tree or for screening. After young trees are established, selectively thin branches to show off its interesting trunk structure. Consider it as a small patio tree with character. Native to Arizona and Baja California. Canopy coverage: 177 square feet.

Parkinsonia praecox

PALO BREA, SONORAN PALO VERDE

Grows slowly 15 to 25 feet high and as wide. Vivid yellow flowers in clusters bloom in April into May. Palo brea has a more upright structure and thornier branches than other *Parkinsonia* species, with distinctive angular branches. Bark on trunks and branches remains green, even as tree ages. Occasional deep watering improves appearance. Native to southern Sonora, Mexico. Canopy coverage: 491 square feet.



Palo brea, *Parkinsonia praecox.*



Foothills palo verde, *Parkinsonia microphylla.*

Phoenix dactylifera

DATE PALM

Date palm is the iconic palm tree of the Coachella Valley. They are large and picturesque, plus produce tasty fruit, but because of their size they are not the right choice for a small garden or home. Plants grow slowly but when mature, reach up to 60 feet high with a trunk 2 to 3 feet in diameter. Even young trees need space—the fronds spread to 25 feet across. Near the trunk, the bases of the feather-shaped leaves have stout thorns. Requires moderate watering throughout summer for trees to look their best. Be aware that fruit drop can be messy, so it is not a smart choice around pools and patios. Native to northern Africa. Canopy coverage: 491 square feet.

Phoenix roebelenii, pygmy date palm, is a related species but is much, much smaller in scale, to 4 to 6 feet high. It is excellent in containers and does best with afternoon shade. It can also be grown indoors if given bright light.

Pinus eldarica

AFGHAN PINE, MONDALE PINE

(Pinus brutia). Pines evoke a feeling of the mountains and create a cooling mood. Because their size, color and texture are so different from plants native to desert regions, it is a challenge to blend them effectively into the landscape. Before planting, it may be helpful to visualize how they will integrate with other plants on site.

Afghan pine grows fast in pyramidal fashion 30 to 40 feet high and to 25 feet wide. Accepts heat, severe wind, cold and a variety of soils. In well-drained soil, roots are better able to penetrate, allowing for deep rooting and more prolific growth. Use as an attractive, dense windscreen or featured landscape tree. Tolerates windy conditions. Native to Afghanistan. Canopy coverage: 491 square feet.

Similar in appearance is *Pinus halepensis,* Aleppo pine. Native to the hills of Lebanon, Aleppo pine is susceptible to spider mites, and generally does not tolerate Coachella Valley conditions long term as well as the Afghan pine.

Pinus pinea

ITALIAN STONE PINE

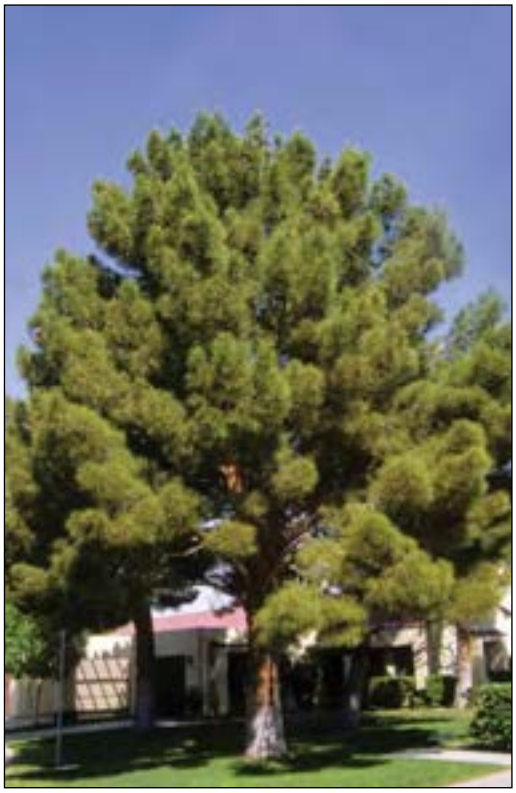
This pine is broadly conical when young, then becomes spreading and flat-topped (shaped like an umbrella) as it ages. Grows at a slow to moderate rate 25 to 40 feet high, sometimes more, spreading to 40 feet wide. Picturesque trunk and branch structure develop over time. Needles are bright green. This tree produces the edible pignolia nut. Native to southern Europe. Canopy coverage: 1,257 square feet.



Date palm, *Phoenix dactylifera.*



Afghan pine, *Pinus eldarica.*



Italian stone pine, *Pinus pinea.*

Pistacia chinensis



CHINESE PISTACHE

This is a long-lived tree from 30 to 40 feet high and 30 to 35 feet wide. Grows at a moderate rate, but with time it produces a broad canopy that creates dense shade. Deciduous, bright green, compound leaves turn intense crimson colors in fall. Accepts a wide variety of adverse conditions. Does best with periodic deep soaking of soil around the root zone. Native to China. Canopy coverage: 962 square feet.

Pistacia lentiscus



MASTIC

A slow-growing, wide-spreading, evergreen tree or large shrub, reaching 15 to 20 feet high with an eventual spread to 20 feet wide. The dense, attractive, bluish green foliage makes it desirable as a background or screen. Flowers are inconspicuous. Tolerates drought, heat and salty soils. Native to the Mediterranean. Canopy coverage: 314 square feet.



Chinese pistache, *Pistacia chinensis*.



Mastic, *Pistacia lentiscus*.

Prosopis species

Mesquite

Mesquites offer quite a lot to Coachella Valley gardeners. Their size, form, color and texture are in tune with the desert, helping provide a suitable sense of place. In fact, native mesquites are excellent for residential landscapes. Their quick rate of growth, cooling, sheltering shade and low maintenance make mesquites natural choices. In recent years, the number of selections available and appropriate for residential use has increased. Each has special merit.

Prosopis chilensis



CHILEAN MESQUITE

This mesquite is admired for its ability to provide fast shade and screening. Trees grow at a rapid rate to 30 feet high and as wide. Young trees need staking and adequate ties to help support heavy top growth. Thin no more than 20 percent of interior growth at any one time to avoid sunburn damage to trunk. Do not plant within 15 feet of walls because roots tend to be shallow. Water deep and wide—at the drip line and beyond—to encourage a deep, extensive root system that will help trees stand up to strong winds. Thorns are variable, but thornless varieties are available. Avoid planting near pools because litter can be a problem throughout the year. Native to Chile. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.

Prosopis glandulosa var. glandulosa



HONEY MESQUITE

Less rigid in growth than other mesquites, honey mesquite has a graceful, slightly weeping form that closely resembles California pepper, *Schinus molle*. It grows at a moderate rate from 15 to 30 feet high with an equal spread. Young branches are thorny. Small, bright green leaves are deciduous. Naturally deep-rooted. Native to Chihuahuan Desert and as far north as Oklahoma. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.



Honey mesquite, *Prosopis glandulosa* var. *glandulosa*.

Prosopis hybrid Phoenix®

PHOENIX MESQUITE

A hybrid with a number of parents, this is a grafted tree with native honey mesquite rootstock and top growth of South American hybrid mesquite. It grows quickly but not excessively so, reaching 30 feet high and as wide. Features the best of both worlds, dense green foliage without thorns, and with the deep-rooting characteristic of honey mesquite. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.

Prosopis pubescens

SCREWBEAN MESQUITE

This deciduous mesquite is known for its unique bean pods, which are borne in clusters and shaped in a unique, spiral fashion. Grow it as a large shrub or small tree, useful as a barrier or security plant due to its small but sharp thorns. Mature size can be up to 30 feet high and as wide, but typically is much smaller. Regular irrigations will increase size and growth rate. Drought tolerant once established; it accepts tough conditions. Native to Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts in Southwest U.S. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.

Prosopis velutina

VELVET MESQUITE

This native mesquite is semi-deciduous, growing to 30 feet high with an equal spread. Foliage is a velvety gray-green. Seedpods are edible and were a staple food of natives. Branches of young trees have small thorns that become less abundant with maturity. With age, trunks take on a gnarled and shaggy appearance, resulting in picturesque trees of great character. Young trees are slow growing and character is more shrublike. Additional water will increase size and growth rate. Native to southeastern Arizona into Texas. Canopy coverage: 707 square feet.



Phoenix mesquite, *Prosopis* Phoenix®

Prunus cerasifera 'Thunder Cloud'

PURPLE PLUM

Open, rounded, tree 10 to 15 feet high, with a rounded crown spreading 12 to 15 feet wide. Admired for its striking, dark purple, almost black foliage. Deciduous. Pink flowers bloom in spring. Trees sometimes bear fruit in summer. Avoid planting in windy locations. Best where it will receive afternoon shade. Hybrid of parents native to the Mediterranean. Canopy coverage: 177 square feet.



Screwbean mesquite, *Prosopis pubescens.*



Velvet mesquite, *Prosopis velutina.*



Purple plum, *Prunus cerasifera* 'Thunder Cloud'.

Psorothamnus spinosus

DESERT SMOKE TREE

(Dalea spinosus.) This native of the Mojave and Sonoran Desert is often overlooked and may be hard to find, and that is a shame. Native to the Coachella Valley region, you'll likely see them in their natural habitat along desert washes. Plants survive wonderfully without much care other than shaping into tree forms (if desired). A small tree of character, it is suited to today's smaller lots. Unlike many other desert trees, it fills in densely to provide an effective screen. Grows at a slow to moderate rate from 15 feet high and as wide. In late spring the silvery gray, smoky-looking branches are virtually obscured by the striking, fragrant, deep, purple-blue flowers. Appearance is better with some extra water. Canopy coverage: 177 square feet.



Desert smoke tree, *Psorothamnus spinosus.*

Punica granatum

POMEGRANATE

This is a deciduous small tree or shrub 12 to 20 feet high and to 12 feet wide, sometimes more, with age. Well-adapted to the Coachella Valley. Pomegranate has much to recommend it: bright green leaves, large, orange-red flowers, healthy fruit, plus golden yellow fall foliage. With time, it becomes a great hedge and security barrier plant. Prune when dormant in winter. Provide generous, regular applications of water in summer if fruit is your goal. Otherwise, supply moderate water. Does well in alkaline soils. Accepts some shade. Native to southern Asia. Canopy coverage: 113 square feet.

Many cultivars are available. Some popular selections include 'Wonderful', 'Chico', 'Legrellei' and 'Nana', a dwarf pomegranate, although it is more of an ornamental with small, dry fruits.



Pomegranate, *Punica granatum.*

Quercus ilex

HOLLY OAK

Excellent, medium-sized evergreen tree from 30 to 50 feet high with an equal spread. A multitude of small, medium green, finely toothed, hollylike leaves provide dense shade. Planted in a row, holly oak makes a good hedge. Planted singly, it is a refined and elegant specimen. Tolerates lawn planting. Native to the Mediterranean. Canopy coverage: 1,963 square feet.



Holly oak, *Quercus ilex.*

Quercus suber

CORK OAK



An evergreen tree with a broad, rounded crown that produces deep shade. Moderate growth from 25 to 40 feet high with a short trunk. Leaves are lustrous, dark green above and grayish beneath. Pale, thick and deeply furrowed, corky bark adds close-up interest. In certain regions of the world, it is harvested as cork for commercial use. Native to the Mediterranean. Canopy coverage: 1,257 square feet.

Quercus virginiana

SOUTHERN LIVE OAK



A quality evergreen tree that grows 50 to 60 feet high with an equal spread. Thrives on deep irrigation. 'Heritage' is an improved selection, adapted to desert heat and wind. It grows rapidly, producing impressive branches and trunk. Native to southeastern U.S. Canopy coverage: 2,827 square feet.

Quercus fusiformis, escarpment live oak, is very similar and is also recommended.



Cork oak, *Quercus suber.*

Rhapis excelsa

SLENDER LADY PALM



An exceptionally decorative and rare palm, slender lady palm forms dense clumps of many individual stems 6 to 8 feet high and up to 10 feet wide. Fronds are palmate. Best growth is in bright, indirect light and nutrient-rich soil; it also responds to applications of fertilizer. It makes a fine specimen plant in filtered or afternoon shade near a pool, or in tubs or even a sunny window indoors. Native to Japan. Canopy coverage: 79 square feet.



Southern live oak, *Quercus virginiana.*

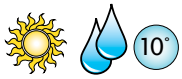


Queen palm, *Syagrus romanzoffiana.*



Slender lady palm, *Rhapis excelsa.*

Rhus lancea



AFRICAN SUMAC

A dense, wide-spreading, evergreen tree with a slightly, weeping or drooping growth habit. Mature trees grow 20 to 25 feet high but may spread to 40 feet or more. A workable tree for a small garden but litter alert: It produces a great deal of litter throughout the year. Reddish stems and shiny, medium green leaves are borne in three slender leaflets. Female plants produce profuse numbers of tan to reddish berries in clusters. Avoid heavy pruning at a single session. Some people are allergic to the tree. Native to South Africa. Canopy coverage: 1,257 square feet.

Sophora secundiflora



TEXAS MOUNTAIN LAUREL

Small tree or large shrub from 10 to 15 feet high and as wide, with glossy green, evergreen leaves. Clusters of purple, wisterialike flowers bloom in spring and perfume the air with their delightful fragrance. Attractive, grayish white seedpods contain red seeds that are poisonous. Plants have overall great tolerance for desert climates. Accepts almost any well-drained soil. Watch for worm pests that can defoliate new leaf growth; treatment is available. Restrained, compact growth requires minimal pruning. Native to Texas. Canopy coverage: 177 square feet.



Texas mountain laurel, *Sophora secundiflora*.



African sumac, *Rhus lancea*.



Tipu tree, *Tipuana tipu*.

Syagrus romanzoffiana



QUEEN PALM

(Arecastrum romanzoffianum). Grows with a straight trunk 25 to 40 feet high and to 20 feet wide with graceful, arching, feathery leaves. It responds to regular moisture and fertilizer during warm periods, but apply cautiously. Encouraging too-rapid growth can cause fronds to break. Locate in areas sheltered from strong winds. Protect young trees when temperatures drop below 30°F. Water deeply when sustained high temperatures reach 110°F to 120°F. It is a clean, low-litter plant to have around pools. Native to Brazil. Canopy coverage: 314 square feet.

Tipuana tipu



TIPU TREE

The mature size of 30 feet high and 40 feet wide is typical but be aware tipu tree can grow much larger. Allow it a little more room to spread to be safe. Its defining feature is the shade it produces, and the profuse numbers of pea-shaped, yellow to gold flowers that bloom late spring into summer. Prune frequently and carefully to control and direct growth. Native to southern Brazil and Bolivia. Canopy coverage: 1,257 square feet.

Trachycarpus fortunei



WINDMILL PALM

A superior, medium-sized palm with fan-shaped leaves that radiate like a windmill from its compact crown. The trunk is naturally shaggy with hairy black fibers and old leaf bases. Do not remove these because it harms the plant. Grows slowly 15 to 25 feet high, spreading 6 to 8 feet wide. Trunks can be 1 foot in diameter. This palm does best with afternoon shade, and does not tolerate reflected sun such as near a pool. Give regular applications of water and fertilizer during the warm months. Due to its smaller stature, it can be planted in atriums, entryways and even in large containers. Native to China. Canopy coverage: 50 square feet.

Ulmus parvifolia



EVERGREEN ELM, LITTLE LEAF ELM

This broad, umbrella-shaped tree grows fast to reach 35 feet high and as wide. Plant is semievergreen, dropping its small, dark green leaves and regrowing them over several months from winter to early spring. Bark is an attractive mottled tan and brown. Water deeply to avoid shallow roots, which can become unsightly (even hazardous) on the soil surface. Native to China. Canopy coverage: 962 square feet.

Ungnadia speciosa



MEXICAN BUCKEYE

This plant is another member of the shrub-or-tree group. Allow branches along the multiple trunks to remain for a large, lush-looking shrub, or prune up for an attractive patio-sized tree. Grows at a moderate rate to reach a mature size of 8 to 12 feet high and wide—larger with optimum conditions. Accepts a range of exposures from reflected sun to partial shade. It is deciduous and provides interest throughout the year: spring flowers are bright pink; the large light green leaves turn golden-yellow for a fall color show. Distinctive three-lobed seedpods follow flowers; seeds are poisonous. Plants look similar to buckeye but they are not related. Native to New Mexico, Texas and northern Mexico. Canopy coverage: 113 square feet.



Windmill palm, *Trachycarpus fortunei*.



Evergreen elm, *Ulmus parvifolia*.



Mexican buckeye, *Ungnadia speciosa*.

Vitex agnus-castus



CHASTE TREE

Long-lived and slow growing, chaste tree is known to tolerate the heat. Narrow leaves produce a spicy fragrance when crunched underfoot. Plants are deciduous with leaves dropping from branches in fall. Grow as a large shrub or small tree 15 to 25 feet high and as wide. Many cultivars are available. Depending on the selection, lavender, blue or white spikes of flowers bloom in summer, attracting butterflies. Cold hardiness also depends on cultivar seed source. Native to southern Europe. Canopy coverage: 491 square feet.

Washingtonia filifera



CALIFORNIA FAN PALM

This is the only palm native to California, growing naturally in Palm Canyon and other canyons in the Coachella Valley. Trunks can become massive, reaching 3-1/2 feet in diameter. Large fronds are borne on long leaf stems; the leaves are fringed with coarse white hairs. Accepts the desert heat but young plants prefer some shade. Slower growing than *Washingtonia robusta* (see following), reaching a mature height of 35 to 40 feet, sometimes more, spreading 15 feet. Provide occasional deep watering. Canopy coverage: 177 square feet.

Washingtonia robusta



MEXICAN FAN PALM

(Washingtonia gracilis). This native of Baja California is similar to California fan palm, but its trunk is more slender, usually 15 to 18 inches in diameter. Fronds are smaller with shorter stems and fewer filaments. Mexican fan palm becomes a skyline tree, reaching 50 to 75 feet high, sometimes much higher. Spread is typically 10 feet. Both Mexican fan palm and California fan palm are best suited to open, expansive spaces; their height often cause them to go out of scale in a residential setting. Group only with own species in clumps of plants, and stagger their heights to evoke a natural grove effect. Provide occasional deep watering. It self sows, so watch for invasive plants popping up elsewhere in the landscape. Canopy coverage: 79 square feet.



Chaste tree, *Vitex agnus-castus*.



California fan palm, *Washingtonia filifera*.



Mexican fan palm, *Washingtonia robusta*.