

Arid Zone Trees



Erythrina bidwillii *Bidwell's Coral Tree*



Horticultural Qualities *Erythrina bidwillii* *Bidwell's Coral Tree*

Foliage: Deciduous to Semi-Evergreen
Mature Height: 15' - 20'
Mature Width: 10' - 25'
Growth Rate: Fast
Hardiness: 25 degrees F
Exposure: Full Sun to Partial Shade
Leaf Color: Green
Shade: Filtered
Flower Color: Red
Flower Shape: Pea Shaped Petals
Flower Season: Spring to Fall
Thorns: Barb
Box Sizes Produced: 24"
Propagation Method: Seed & Cuttings



www.aridzonetrees.com

Arid Zone Trees, P. O. Box 167, Queen Creek, AZ 85242, Phone 480-987-9094 e-mail: info@aridzonetrees.com

Erythrina bidwillii

Bidwell's Coral Tree

Erythrina bidwillii (Bidwell's Coral Bean) is a deciduous to semi-evergreen shrub to small tree when protected from frost can obtain the height of 20 feet. It flowers during the summer months a very attractive red pea shaped flower that stands out among the traditional desert landscape. The tree needs cleaning of spent flowers for the manicured clean landscape. Wear gloves when pruning to protect hand from barb on branch stem.

The bright red tubular flower of *Erythrina bidwillii* is typically pollinated by insects and hummingbirds. Pollen adheres to the hummingbirds head and bill transferring pollen between flowers. Cross pollination occurs when pollen is transferred from one trees flower to another trees flower. When pollinating the hummingbird is reward with the trees sucrose rich nectar fulfilling their energy requirement and high metabolic rate.

The wood is strong and light weight with the buoyancy of balsa wood. The wood has been used for canoe out-rigging, fish net floats and surfboards. In Africa the tree is considered a royal tree and planted on the graves of Zulu chiefs. When the tree begins to flower farmers knew it was time to plant crops. Medicinal use suggests that species have antibacterial, anti-inflammatory and analgesic effects. The seed is said to be a lucky charm.

The genus name *Erythrina* comes from the Greek *erythros* meaning red, both the flower and seed is bright red. There are over 100 species of *Erythrina* that grow in warm frost free regions of the world. The distributions are: Mexico (27), Central America (25), South America (21), West Indies (9), Tropical Africa (26), South Africa (5), Continental Asia (6), Melanesia and South Pacific (6), and Australia (2). One species (***E. fusca***) grows on all the continents except Africa, and three species are native to the United States and the Hawaiian Islands for a total of 116 species.

Cultural Practices

Foster the development of a more dispersed root system and reduce the risk of wind throw by arranging irrigation emitters at varying distances from the trunk to encourage roots to "seek out" water and nutrients. Irrigation emitter arrangement along with other information on irrigations practices for desert trees can be found at www.aridzonetrees.com and click on the FAQ link.

Prune as needed to reinforce the structure and form of the tree. Periodic thinning is the most desirable method of pruning. Avoid hedging or heading back desert species, as this will only stimulate excessive branching. Do not remove more than 30% of the canopy during the summer as this can lead to sunburn injuries that can later be invaded by wood boring insects. Always use clean, sharp tools that are cleaned regularly in a 10% solution of bleach. For detail pruning guide see www.aridzonetrees.com and click on the FAQ interactive button.

Periodically insect pests can be a problem on some desert trees. On young trees, insect infestation can slow typical seasonal growth. Inspect trees during the growing season for common garden sucking insects such as aphids, thrip, whiteflies or psyllids. During dry months, (May and June) in dusty conditions, spider mites can appear. Monitor for infestation and apply controls as needed. Spray applications of water or water and Safer Soap give short-term control (3 to 7 days) for small insect population. For heavy infestation or longer control use federally registered insecticides. A contact insecticide application will kill existing adults. An application with a systemic soil drench will provide 8 to 12 weeks control for any post application insect hatchings or migration of insects. Before using pesticide for the first time or on new plants or cultivar, treat a few plants and check for phytotoxicity. **Always read label and follow label instruction before using pesticides. For pesticide control recommendations contact a licensed pest control advisor.**

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