

# Arid Zone Trees



## Pithecellobium pallens *Tenaza*



### Horticultural Qualities *Pithecellobium pallens* *Tenaza*

**Foliage:** Evergreen  
**Mature Height:** 10' - 30'  
**Mature Width:** 10' - 18'  
**Growth Rate:** Fast  
**Hardiness:** 15 degrees F  
**Exposure:** Full Sun  
**Leaf Color:** Green  
**Shade:** Filtered  
**Flower Color:** Cream  
**Flower Shape:** Ball  
**Flower Season:** Spring  
**Thorns:** Yes  
**Box Sizes Produced:** 24"  
**Propagation Method:** Seed

[www.aridzonetrees.com](http://www.aridzonetrees.com)

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# Pithecellobium pallens

## *Tenaza*

*Pithecellobium pallens* (common names *Tenaza* or *Ape's Earring*) is another specie that could be used more widely in the southwest. The branches are long, upright and straight, giving the tree a vertical, almost columnar growth habit. Small thorns are found on juvenile trees but, as trees mature, the new growth is nearly thornless. Leaves resemble those of Sweet Acacia with multiple small, light green leaflets that produce an open canopy and filtered shade. Its more columnar growth allows its use in side yards, as a screen planting or hedge, between buildings, along fences or other locations where space is limited. Field evaluations showed *Tenaza* was hardy to about 15 F, sustaining only limited leaf burn at this temperature.

Some literature suggests that *P. pallens* grows as a large shrub, maturing at 10' to 15' while others report mature trees at 20' to 30'. Its growth rate and mature size have not been fully evaluated in desert landscape conditions. Experience to date, with trees in landscapes, tends to support the larger mature height. It has a fairly fast growth habit and takes full sun. From Spring to Fall (generally after rains or irrigation) clusters of creamy white, fragrant, powder-puff flowers, similar to those on Fairy Duster (*Calliandra eriophylla*), cover the branches. These flower displays are very showy and add to the value of *Tenaza* as an accent or specimen tree. Trees require regular supplemental irrigation during the hot desert months. Without summer irrigations trees will go summer deciduous.

## 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](http://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](http://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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