

Arid Zone Trees



Acacia rigidula *Black Brush Acacia*



Horticultural Qualities

Acacia rigidula *Black Brush Acacia*

Foliage: Deciduous
Mature Height: 10' - 15'
Mature Width: 10' - 15'
Growth Rate: Moderate
Hardiness: 15 degrees F
Exposure: Full Sun
Leaf Color: Green
Shade: Filtered
Flower Color: Yellow to Cream
Flower Shape: Rod Shape
Flower Season: Spring
Thorns: Yes
Box Sizes Produced: Not in production at AZT
Propagation Method: Seed



www.aridzonetrees.com

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Acacia rigidula *Black Brush Acacia*

Acacia rigidula (Black Bush Acacia) is native to western and southern Texas and a several northeastern Mexican states. In natural setting it is typically found on rocky hillsides and along canyon floors at elevations from 1100 to 1800 feet above sea level. It occurs as scattered individual plant and in clumps or thickets. Under natural growing conditions the tree matures to about 10 to 15 feet tall and as wide but will likely grow larger in landscape settings. Arizona boasts the co-national champion Black Bush at 26 feet tall, 29 feet wide and a trunk diameter of 16 inches as designated by the Arizona Chapter of the National Registry of Big Trees.

Yellow to cream colored flowers arranged in 2 to 3 inch long, slender spikes appear from March to mid-June. Slender pods about 3 inches long develop from these flowers. The tree is deciduous and the branches are armed with numerous thorns. Black Bush thrives in full sun and a variety of soil types and conditions including very poor calcareous (caliche) soils. Trees grow at a moderate to slow rate. Regular irrigation is needed for establishment but, in the absence of severe drought, can be naturalized to survive on desert rainfall. Monthly summer irrigation of mature, established trees optimizes growth and appearance. Immature trees are sparse and rangy, becoming increasingly dense as they reach maturity.

Part of the unique charm of this tree, besides its modest statue, is its dark green, glossy, closely spaced foliage, borne on stiff, densely packed, gray barked branches. In summer Black Bush is easily mistaken for Texas Ebony (*Pithecellobium flexicaule*). These qualities combine to make Black Bush an excellent screen, barrier or foundation plant, as a backdrop for other flowering plants in the landscape or for erosion control. Specimens can be left as a large mounding shrub or pruned to a sculptural tree form that accents the contrast between green leaves and gray bark. As a deciduous tree it is best used in combination with evergreen trees or shrubs.

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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