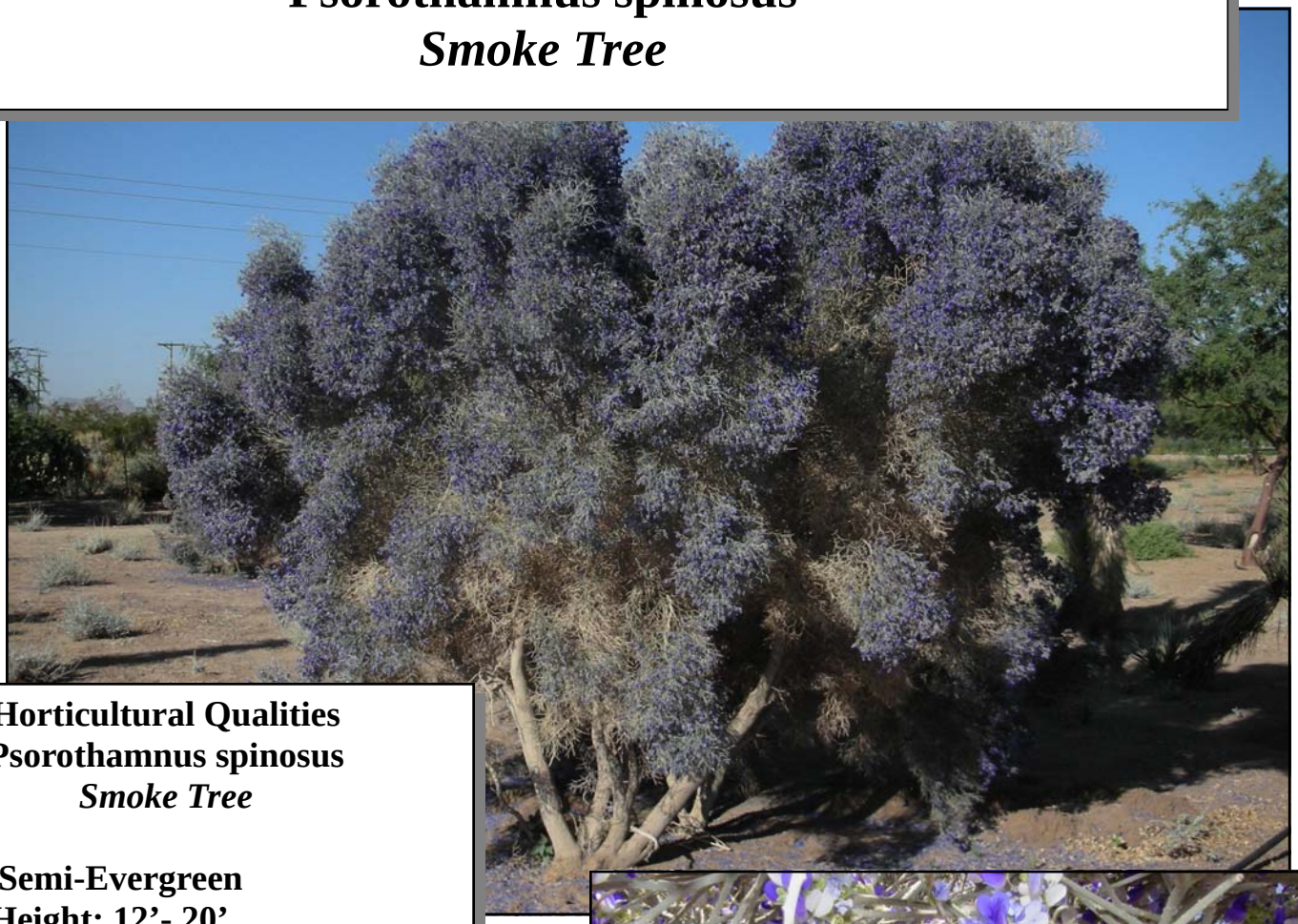
Arid Zone Trees

Psorothamnus spinosus
Smoke Tree



Horticultural Qualities
Psorothamnus spinosus
Smoke Tree

Foliage: Semi-Evergreen
Mature Height: 12’- 20’
Mature Width: 8' - 12'
Growth Rate: Moderate
Hardiness: 20-25 degrees F
Exposure: Full Sun
Leaf Color: Ash Gray
Shade: Filtered
Flower Color: Dark Purple to Deep Blue
Flower Shape: Pea Shaped Petals
Flower Season: Early Summer
Thorns: Yes
Box Sizes Produced: Not in Production

www.aridzonetrees.com

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

Psorothamnus spinosus
Smoke Tree

Looking like a frozen column of smoke rising improbably from an austere desert wash, it is obvious that **Smoke Trees** are aptly named. With the unique arrangement of dense, ash gray branches and short-lived gray leaves the tree has an unmistakable billowy appearance that draws the eye to its unusual form and color. **Smoke Tree (Psorothamnus spinosus)** is native to dry, sandy washes in southern Arizona and southeastern California at elevations below 400 to 500 feet. In these desert conditions it matures to a height of anywhere from 12'to 20'with a spread approaching 8'to 12'.

Smoke Tree, also called **Smoke Thorn Dalea** and **Corona-de-Dristo**, is highly drought tolerant and best adapted to decomposed granite or sandy soils that are well-drained and very low in organic matter. It tolerates full sun, grows slowly even under ideal conditions and is hardy to 20 to 25 degrees F. Small gray leaves, 1/4 to 1/2 inch long, are short lived and generally appear fro a few weeks in response to fall and winter rains. The form and texture of the canopy are created by the repeated, forked branching of the tree as it grows. Branches and branchlets are sharp tipped and stiff. The cast majority of photosynthesis is carried out by these branchlets with the chlorophyll found just below a surface layer of dense gray hairs.

In stark contrast to the generally subdued appearance of this tree, it produces the most remarkable flowers. Small, dark purple to deep blue pea-like flowers, up to 1/2" long, appears in clusters at or near branch ends. Emerging from the purple flower petals are bright orange anthers. Flowers can lead a brief, brilliant blue cast to the appearance of the tree. Flowers appear from June to July with buds developing in April and May. Flowers are followed by single seeded pods. **Smoke Trees** bring a unique and delicate texture and remarkable flowers into the landscape.

It works well as a single accent or specimen tree, in groupings, as a transitional tree back to native desert on the perimeters of the landscape or to cast elaborate shadows against structures or walls. It offers strong contrast to dense, green canopied, desert trees species and blends well with cacti, boulders and hardscape elements. Locate **Smoke Trees** within the landscape with care and appreciate that they require little or no supplemental water (one study reported that under green house conditions Smoke Trees survived on four irrigations in 2 1/2 years). Under-story planting or adjacent trees and shrub or to enhance natural form and texture.

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 phytotoxicty. **Always read label and follow label instruction before using pesticides. For pesticide control recommendations contact a licensed pest control advisor .**

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