

Guide to Small Desert-Adapted Trees

Below are some smaller desert trees (maximum 20 feet tall by 20 feet wide) that are often overlooked but can make great additions to your landscape.

Anacacho Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia lunarioides*) - Full sun/ Partial shade



- Hardy to 15°F
- Prune in June
- Leaves are shaped like butterflies
- No thorns
- Great patio tree
- Shrub-like 8 feet by 6 feet at maturity
- White or pink clusters spring to summer

Cascalote (*Caesalpinia cacalaco*)



- Full sun
- Hardy to 20°F
- Fast-growing
- Very thorny (thornless variety available)
- Stunning winter bloomer followed by colorful red seed pods
- Yellow flower clusters from September through February

Feather Tree (*Lysiloma microphylla thornberi*) - Full sun



- Hardy to 25°F
- Prune in January
- Plant in spring
- Medium growth rate
- Not thorny
- Sensitive to the cold
- Too much water may lead to chlorosis
- Beneficial to native wildlife
- Small white puffball flowers from May to June (flat seedpods follow bloom)

Guajillo Acacia (*Acacia berlandieri*)



- Full sun
- Hardy to 15°F
- Prune in June
- Tendency toward multiple trunk structure
- Slow-growing
- Slightly thorny
- Great for screening
- White puffball flowers from February to May (seedpods in summer)

Kidneywood (*Eysenhardtia orthocarpa*)



- Full sun/reflective heat
- Hardy to 15°F
- Sonoran desert native
- Tolerates poor soils
- Moderate growth
- Fragrant white flowers smell like vanilla
- Attracts butterflies

Leather-Leaf Acacia (*Acacia craspedocarpa*)



- Full sun/ Reflective sun
- Hardy to 20°F
- Slow to moderate growth rate
- No thorns
- Does well in containers
- Great textural plant
- Yellow puffball flowers from spring to summer

Mastic Tree (*Pistacia lentiscus*)



- Full sun
- Hardy to 20°F
- Slow growing
- Non-showy flowers
- Withstands poor soils
- Provides great shade
- Very drought tolerant
- Resin has been used for chewing gum and perfumes

Mulga Acacia (*Acacia aneura*)



- Full sun
- Hardy to 20°F
- Prune in October
- Narrow, compact growth structure
- Medium growth rate
- No thorns
- Puffy yellow flowers in 3 or 4 cycles per year, but mostly in spring/summer

Palo Blanco (*Acacia willardiana*)



- Full sun/ Reflective sun
- Hardy to 25°F
- Attractive white peeling bark
- Great for narrow spaces
- Slow/moderate growth rate
- Low litter
- Spikes of cream flowers in spring

Screwbean Mesquite (*Prosopis pubescens*)



- Full sun, accepts some shade
- Sonoran desert native
- Frost hardy to 20°F
- Prune in late winter
- Unique spiraled pods that are edible
- Slow growth rate
- Beneficial to native wildlife
- Relatively clean tree because of small leaflets
- Puffy yellow flowers in spring and summer

Sweet Acacia (*Acacia farnesiana*)



- Full sun
- Hardy to 10°F
- Plant any time of year
- Fast-growing
- Very thorny!
- Sweet scented flowers lend nice winter color
- Beneficial to native wildlife
- Golden puffball flowers from late fall to March (seed pods in summer)

Texas Ebony (*Ebenopsis ebano*)



- Full sun, accepts some shade
- Hardy to 20°F
- Plant in spring or fall
- Prune in late winter
- Slow growth rate
- Very thorny
- Gives you dark green leaf color all year
- Beneficial to native wildlife
- Puffy cream-colored flowers in spring and summer

Texas Olive (*Cordia boissieri*)



- Full sun
- Hardy to 20°F
- Selectively prune in late winter for tree shape
- Slow to moderate growth rate
- Evergreen
- No thorns
- Large, white showy flowers spring to fall
- Moderate litter due to flowers

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