



# *Acacia farnesiana* Sweet Acacia<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

This tall, semievergreen, native shrub or small tree has feathery, finely divided leaflets of a soft, medium green color (Fig. 1). The slightly rough stems are a rich chocolate brown or grey, possessing long, sharp, multiple thorns. The small, yellow, puff-like flowers are very fragrant and appear in clusters in late winter then sporadically after each new flush of growth, providing nearly year-round bloom. The persistent fruits have a glossy coat and contain seeds which are cherished by birds and other wildlife.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Acacia farnesiana*

**Pronunciation:** uh-KAY-shuh far-nee-zee-AY-nuh

**Common name(s):** Sweet Acacia, Huisache

**Family:** *Leguminosae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** Bonsai; container or above-ground planter; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; reclamation plant; specimen; residential street tree

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 25 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

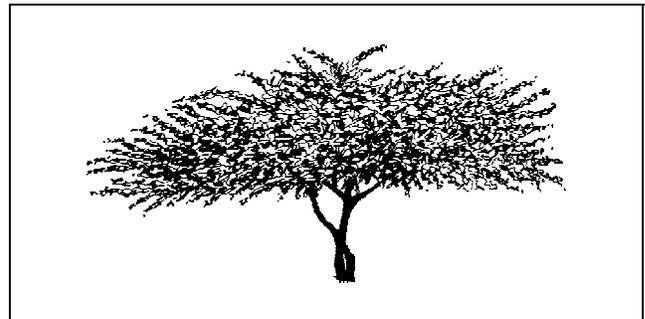


Figure 1. Middle-aged Sweet Acacia.

**Crown shape:** round; spreading; vase shape

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** bipinnately compound; even pinnately compound

**Leaflet margin:** entire

**Leaflet shape:** linear

**Leaflet venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** semievergreen

**Leaflet blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

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2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### Flower

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristics:** pleasant fragrance; very showy; year round flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** elongated; pod

**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown; green

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; showy trunk; thorns are present on the trunk or branches

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** not known to be susceptible

**Pest resistance:** no pests are normally seen on the tree



**Figure 3.** Foliage of Sweet Acacia.

trade but popular with those who care for it in the landscape. Sweet Acacia has its place in any sunny shrub border or as an accent plant in any garden if located away from areas where children frequent, since the thorns can inflict severe pain. It is well suited for dry climates with little rainfall.

Propagation of Sweet Acacia is by seeds or cuttings.

### **Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Occasionally anthracnose can infect leaves.

## **USE AND MANAGEMENT**

It can be trained into a tree for use in median strips, or can be used as a street tree where there is not a need for tall-vehicle clearance beneath the crown. The small stature and low, spreading branching habit makes pruning for vehicular clearance difficult unless it is properly trained from an early age. But the required input of manhours for early training may be offset by the high drought, pest and insect resistance of the tree. Do not locate the tree too close to where people can be injured by the sharp thorns on the branches.

Although easy to grow in any acid or alkaline soil, including clay, the leaves will drop if the soil is allowed to dry out. This drought avoidance mechanism allows the plant to grow well with no irrigation once established. Growing best in full sun, this thorny, well-branched shrub makes an excellent barrier planting or nesting cover for wildlife. When trained as a small tree and used as a freestanding specimen, it is likely to provide a source for comments, such as "what's that?". But its growth rate is extremely slow, making it unpopular in the nursery