



Prosopis glandulosa Mesquite¹

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INTRODUCTION

This North American native tree reaches 30 feet in height and forms a rounded canopy with many drooping, crooked branches emanating low on the trunk (Fig. 1). These branches are armed with one-inch-long spines which can cause much damage to flesh, but thornless selections are available from nurseries. Mesquite has a tendency to form thickets and these thorns help make the dense growth impenetrable. The reddish-brown bark is rough and fissured. The root system of Mesquite is quite extensive and will spread far and wide to consume whatever moisture is available, sometimes to the detriment of other plantings near the tree. Mesquite is considered a weed along the Rio Grande and in other areas in Texas where it will easily invade adjacent land.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Prosopis glandulosa*
Pronunciation: pro-SO-piss gland-yoo-LOW-suh
Common name(s): Mesquite, Honey Mesquite
Family: *Leguminosae*
USDA hardiness zones: 6B through 9 (Fig. 2)
Origin: native to North America
Uses: Bonsai; reclamation plant; shade tree; specimen; no proven urban tolerance
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

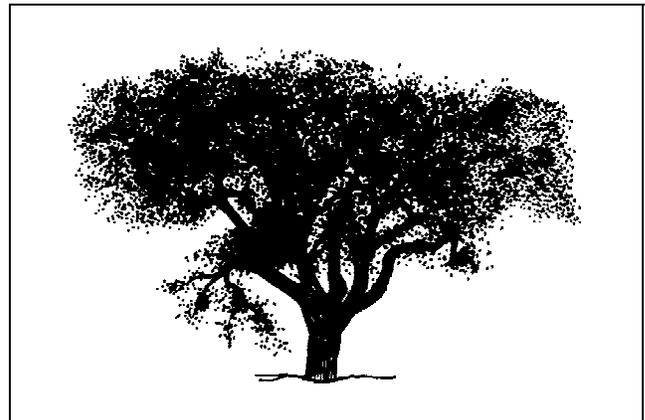


Figure 1. Mature Mesquite.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 25 to 35 feet
Spread: 25 to 35 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: round; spreading
Crown density: open
Growth rate: medium
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: bipinnately compound; even pinnately compound
Leaflet margin: entire
Leaflet shape: linear
Leaflet venation: none, or difficult to see; parallel
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaflet blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; pod

Fruit length: 6 to 12 inches; 3 to 6 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; 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; alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: high

Soil 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: seeds itself into the landscape

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

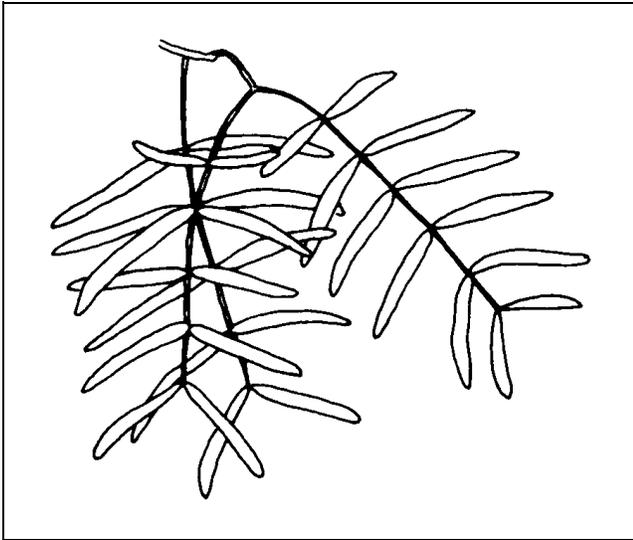


Figure 3. Foliage of Mesquite.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

The bright green, pinnately compound leaves lend a fine texture to this irregular-shaped tree which casts a light shade. When given adequate moisture and trained and pruned to create a somewhat uniformly-shaped crown, Mesquite can be an attractive, somewhat weeping landscape specimen. From May to September, Mesquite is adorned with two-inch-wide, extremely fragrant blooms which are not especially showy due to their yellow to greenish-white coloration but are still easily found by bees who love them. The seeds which follow are quite popular with birds and other wildlife and, at times, man. The southwestern native Americans used the seed, or beans, as a food source. The beans contain as much as 30% sugar and, when fermented, produce an alcoholic beverage. A meal made from the beans was also used by native Americans to make bread.

Mesquite should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil. The tree is very drought tolerate. Young plants can be successfully transplanted while small, but they need irrigation until established. Fire used to limit its invasive habit. It has become an unimaginable weed in Texas due to fire control. Prior to fire control, heat from flames killed many trees and this kept the tree from spreading throughout the region.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests

It is occasionally bothered by borers.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.