

# Caesalpinia mexicana Mexican Caesalpinia<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Fine textured foliage and bright yellow flowers borne on the new growth combine to make this a wonderful small tree or large shrub for any garden or landscape. Flowers cover the canopy for several months during the warm season. Soft flowers and pinnately compound foliage contrast with the small, inconspicuous thorns present along the stems. The pods are slightly curled and seeds germinate only locally in the landscape. They do not appear to spread to other landscapes.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Caesalpinia mexicana*

**Pronunciation:** sez-al-PIN-ee-uh meck-sick-KAY-nuh

**Common name(s):** Mexican Caesalpinia

**Family:** Leguminosae

**Plant type:** tree

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 1)

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** specimen; near a deck or patio; container or above ground planter; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size)

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

## Description

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 12 to 18 feet

**Plant habit:** round

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine



Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** bipinnately compound

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

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

**Leaf color:** green

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**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristic:** summer flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** pod or pod-like

**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches

**Fruit cover:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; not particularly showy; no thorns

**Current year stem/twig color:** brown

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun

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

**Drought tolerance:**

**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown

**Plant spacing:** not applicable

## Other

**Roots:** usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

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

## Use and Management

Locate Mexican Poinciana in full sun in any spot in the landscape including near a patio or deck, or in a shrub border to add color and texture. Train the plant into a small tree by removing lower foliage and branches, or let the rounded form develop with branches drooping to the ground if there is enough room for it to spread. The outstanding flower display and small size makes it well suited for planting in a container, even in a hot, dry location. Good drought tolerance makes it well adapted for planting in parking lot bufferstrips and in other tough sites.

## Pest and Diseases

Leaf chewing insects occasionally eat some foliage. The plant has not been widely grown so its pest problems are not well known.