

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

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## Introduction

This tall, semievergreen, native shrub or small tree has feathery, finely divided leaflets of a soft, medium green color. 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.

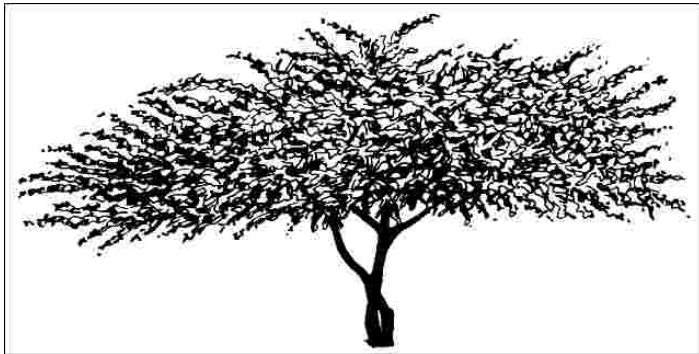


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Acacia farnesiana*: Sweet Acacia

## 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:** 9A through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential

**Uses:** specimen; street without sidewalk; container or planter; reclamation; highway median; Bonsai

**Availability:** not native to North America

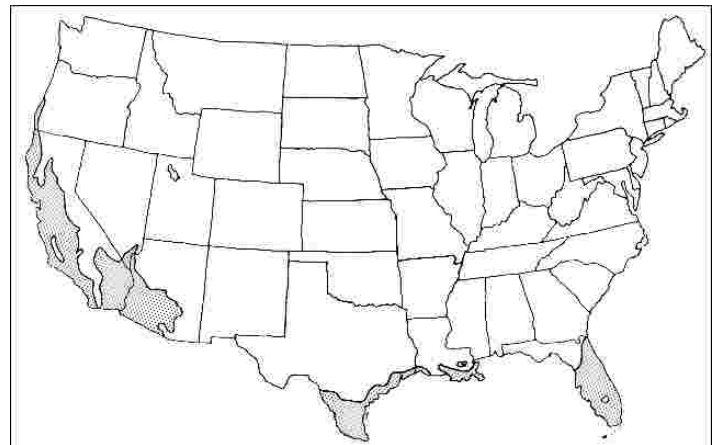


Figure 2. Range

## Description

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 25 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular

**Crown shape:** vase, round, spreading

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

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

1. This document is ENH-164, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date November 1, 1993. Reviewed May 2011. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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**Leaf type:** bipinnately compound, even-pinnately compound

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** linear

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** semi-evergreen

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

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristics:** very showy

## Fruit

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

**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown, green

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun

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

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** no

**Outstanding tree:** no

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** resistant

**Pest resistance:** free of serious pests and diseases

## 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



Figure 3. Foliage

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 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.