**Acacia farnesiana: Sweet Acacia**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

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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, and possess 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.

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**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

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**Description**

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet  
**Spread:** 15 to 25 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular  
**Crown shape:** vase, round, spreading

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Crown density: open
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: bipinnately compound, even-pinnately compound
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: semievergreen
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

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 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.