

Caesalpinia mexicana Mexican Caesalpinia¹

Edward F. Gilman, Ryan W. Klein, and Gail Hansen²

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.



Figure 1. Full form *Caesalpinia mexicana* Mexican caesalpinia.
Credits: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Leaf—*Caesalpinia mexicana*: Mexican caesalpinia.
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Figure 3. Flower - *Caesalpinia mexicana*: Mexican caesalpinia.
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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor; Ryan W. Klein; and Gail Hansen; Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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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 (Figure 4)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

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



Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Credits: undefined

Description

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 12 to 18 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

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

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

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

Use and Management

Locate Mexican caesalpinia 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 buffer strips 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.