Mexican Palo Verde

Parkinsonia aculeata

Height: 30 feet

Spread: 30 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 8a

Other Names: Jerusalem Thorn, Retama, Cercidium aculeata



Mexican Palo Verde flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



Mexican Palo Verde in bloom
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Description:

This spiny tree may have single or multiple stems, and can be maintained as a large shrub; deciduous in dry weather; fragrant yellow flowers with orange blotches in spring and fall; a lovely landscape accent for drier climate areas; protect from frost

Ornamental Features

Mexican Palo Verde features showy clusters of fragrant yellow pea-like flowers with a orange blotch at the ends of the branches from mid spring to mid fall. It has attractive green deciduous foliage. The tiny oval compound leaves are highly ornamental but do not develop any appreciable fall color. The fruits are showy brown pods displayed in late fall. The fruit can be messy if allowed to drop on the lawn or walkways, and may require occasional clean-up.

Landscape Attributes

Mexican Palo Verde is a multi-stemmed deciduous tree with an upright spreading habit of growth. It lends an extremely fine and delicate texture to the landscape composition which can make it a great accent feature on this basis alone.

This is a relatively low maintenance tree, and should only be pruned after flowering to avoid removing any of the current season's flowers. It is a good choice for attracting birds, bees and butterflies to your yard. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spiny

Mexican Palo Verde is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Shade
- Hedges/Screening
- Container Planting



Mexican Palo Verde flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Planting & Growing

Mexican Palo Verde will grow to be about 30 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 30 feet. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 5 feet from the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 60 years or more.

This tree does best in full sun to partial shade. It prefers dry to average moisture levels with very well-drained soil, and will often die in standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for xeriscaping or the moisture-conserving landscape. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is native to parts of North America.

Mexican Palo Verde is a fine choice for the yard, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Its large size and upright habit of growth lend it for use as a solitary accent, or in a composition surrounded by smaller plants around the base and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when grown in a container, it may not perform exactly as indicated on the tag - this is to be expected. Also note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.