

CAMPUS ARBORETUM



Focus on:
Senegalia mellifera
"blackthorn acacia"
Fabaceae



Blackthorn is a beautiful and adaptable medium-sized tree growing up to 25 feet tall with a spherical crown. Unlike most *Senegalia* species, this one has up to 3 pairs of pinnae with relatively large, blue-green leaflets and marginal hairs. After the initial 3-year juvenile period, flowers will appear twice a year prior to the rainy seasons. Flower buds appear on 1 year old wood, developing into small, globe-shaped, fragrant, cream or pale pink flowers with exerted filaments, packed tightly on very short, indeterminate spikes. The deliciously sweet smell and excellent honey made from the flowers justifies the specific epithet "*mellifera*", meaning "honey-bearing".

Blackthorn is tolerant to temperatures as low as 35°F (once mature) and higher than 104°F. The species is extremely drought-resistant once established, growing generally in areas with as little as **1 inch of annual rainfall!** As a member of the bean family, this species has a symbiotic relationship with certain soil microbes that allow the plants to fix atmospheric nitrogen. This allows it to grow without supplemental N-fertilizer.



Flowers are pale creamy <1/2" globes appearing from twice a year.

Ethnobotanical Uses:

The leaves and pods are a protein-rich, nutritious fodder consumed by livestock and wild animals and flowers that provide nectar to attracts bats, bush babies, and bees. The flower nectar produces a high-quality honey, hence the name mellifera. The wood makes a very hard slightly elastic timber, that does not split easily, and is very durable, and well suited for construction and fencing as it is both termite and borer-proof). The bark and roots are used in ethnomedicine to make a decoction used in treating stomach problems, sterility, pneumonia, malaria and syphilis. The bark also contains astringent tannins, which are administered orally to treat diarrhea and dysentery, and internal bleeding. External application of the plant tannins is used as a treatment of wounds and other skin problems, hemorrhoids, foot and mouth odor, as well as some eye problems. While there are many

industrial and medicinal products derived from this tree, the leaves contain a small amount of N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT), a hallucinogenic drug. If ingested, effects may persist for days or weeks!



Cautionary Notes:

Blackthorn trees survive in the semi-desert and are common in dry woodland where they can spread by coppice growth to form impenetrable tangled, spiny 300 ft diameter thickets that threaten diversity and must be managed by fire control.

(Above) Stems have a pair of hook shaped bracts at each node.
...looks like a peace sign but REALLY not so friendly for the arborist!

Thanks for joining me on my journey to see and understand trees! The health of the planet and our fellow humans depends on respectful and understanding tree selection choices. I hope you're inspired to deepen the connection by visiting campus. and using the [interactive arboretum map](#) to find the tree featured in this spotlight for a more immersive education and sensory experience.

Enjoy!

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