

# CAMPUS ARBORETUM



Focus on:  
*Vachellia erioloba*  
"giraffe thorn"  
Fabaceae



**Vicious? A little. Indestructible? Perhaps. Inspiring? Absolutely!**

Giraffe thorn, formerly classified as *Acacia erioloba* is an evergreen tree that grows up to 50 feet tall. The branches are heavily protected by pairs of 3 inch long white-brown spines with bulbous bases on the stem nodes. The leaves are twice divided with hairless rich grey-green leaves. After 10 years, the tree will produce brilliant yellow, puff-ball shaped, sweetly fragrant flowers during the winter season. They remain in bloom through spring and summer. The second half of the botanical name (the "specific epithet") is "erioloba"...this refers to the ear-like, halfmoon-shaped legume pods it produces.

To learn more, visit this Campus Arboretum Species Description Page found at: <https://apps.cals.arizona.edu/arboretum/taxon.aspx?id=22>

The giraffe thorn is native to Southern Africa, where it is a protected tree, growing mostly inland





in the western half of Africa and extending into Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and central Africa. In gentler climates, the tree has some potential to be invasive...but in extreme climates, especially in urban cultivation, it has many features that allow it to be considered as "climate ready". It grows in areas with annual precipitation between 4-35 inches, requires a lot of space, prefers full sun and is able to tolerate very poor soils, hot summer temperatures and severe frosts.



Twice divided rich green leaves.



Ear-shaped fruit pods.

### **Ethnobotanical Uses:**

This plant has historically been used for its medicinal and material value, but not commonly for landscaping. The dried powder pods can be used to treat ear infections. The gum is used to treat gonorrhea and by pulverizing the burned bark, it can be used to treat headaches. The roots can treat tooth aches. Additionally, the root bark is used by bush men to make quivers, seeds are roasted and used as a substitute for coffee and the strong timber is used as a building material or as firewood.



Yellow "puff ball" flowers appear in winter.

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!

*Tanya*

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