

# CAMPUS ARBORETUM



Focus on:  
*Vachellia tortillis*  
"umbrella thorn"  
Fabaceae



The umbrella thorn is a slow-growing tree from Africa that reaches heights of 15-50 feet in its natural habitat. The stems of the umbrella thorn contain very

large thorns, 1" long leaves and globe-shaped ½" long and in February, white, fragrant flowers. 5" long bean pods are rolled up into a tight helix. This latter features justifies the specific epithet "tortilis" which refers to the plant's twisted seed pod shape.

The umbrella thorn is not a highly cultivated species because of its very niche-growing preferences. It is recommended for planting in very hot climates (USDA zones 10-12). They have a surprising range of temperatures where they've been observed growing – tolerating temperatures up to 122 degrees F and as low as 32 degrees F. In Tucson, this species may do well on a south or west wall with winter protection. In Arizona, it is found growing at the Biosphere2.

To learn more, visit this Campus Arboretum Species Description Page found at: <https://apps.cals.arizona.edu/arboretum/taxon.aspx?id=1091>



(Above) Bean pods coil in a helical shape.

Photo Credit: Joan Young

<https://natureswow2.blogspot.com/2014/10/umbrella-thorn-acacia-tortilis.html>

### **Ethnobotanical Uses:**

The seeds, bark, and stems are used the most for their medicinal properties. An infusion can be made from the bark, which is consumed to treat stomach aches and diarrhea. The bark is dried and then powdered to use as a disinfectant in healing wounds. The stems have been used to treat asthma.



Seed pods are also used to make porridge eaten by humans, while the same seed pods act as a powerful molluscicide and algicide.

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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