

CAMPUS ARBORETUM



Focus on:
Albizia lebbbeck
"siris tree"
Fabaceae



Lebeck is a deciduous, woody tree from the Indian subcontinent that grows up to 50 feet high in cultivation. Stems are unarmed and carry 2-3 inch wide showy, yellow mimosa-like flowers with many long, showy stamens protruding from the corolla. Legume pods produced on the plant are very long (up to 9 inches) long, dry to a dark tan color and remain on the tree through autumn. When they dry, the wavy suture of the pod creates an undulating form, allowing for the seeds inside and adjacent pods to create a tremendous rattle when the wind blows.

It is widely distributed in Western and Southeast Asia, Australia, Northern and West Africa, throughout the Caribbean, Central America, and the northern and eastern regions of South America. In tropical areas, it is invasive as it spreads quickly by both seed propagation and suckering. In temperate climates, it is sensitive to freeze injury, but in the sweet spot – an arid climate, with some protection from cold, it is a gem of a tree! While the tops of young plants will die back at temperatures less than 17F, the plants will coppice and sprout new shoots

from the base in Spring. Those on our campus show no sign of the extreme damage they encountered here just 12 years ago! It also has not appeared in the more than thirty years since it was planted to demonstrate invasive potential. To reduce potential for invasive behavior however, cultivate the tree with widely spaced drip emitters away from natural areas and judiciously schedule irrigation to limit vigor.

To learn more, visit this Campus Arboretum Species Description Page found at: <https://apps.cals.arizona.edu/arboretum/taxon.aspx?id=337>



(Above/Below) Tropical leaves and joyful sprays of yellow flowers...what's not to love?



(Below) Spent blooms fall as a "confetti of aftermath" reminding me of this poem.

**Ethnobotanical Uses:**

This species is widely distributed (and has many common names) because it has dozens of uses. In addition to being used for reforestation, agroforestry, and firewood plantations, its wood is dense and strong, its foliage and pods are exceptionally high in crude protein and carbohydrates, and its bark contains saponins and tannins used respectively in making soap and tanning leather. Further, its propensity to nodulate without mycorrhizal inoculation, ensures it fixes nitrogen and drop leaves under its enormous canopy builds both soil structure and fertility. Traditionally, the tree was used in folk remedies for the treatments of boils, cough, eye ailments, flu, lung problems, and leprosy. A recent review of published research on the tree revealed evidence for broad use of lebeck's phytochemicals in pharmacological treatment of respiratory, skin, gastrointestinal, oral disorders, eye, urinary, genital, anorectal, inflammatory, and neurological disorders, and venereal diseases.

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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