

Desert Spring Awakened By Palo Verdes

Leland Burkhart

Steve Fazio

Department of Horticulture

The desert of southern Arizona during April and early May is highlighted by the mass of vivid yellow bloom of the Palo Verde. Winter visitors marvel at the magnificence of the desert in bloom, largely contributed by these trees.

The Palo Verde is a tree recognized for desert landscaping in urban areas. The Spanish name is interpreted as "green trunk," or green tree. Native trees are preserved in their respective desert settings in urban developments, and new plantings are most effective in desert culture around homes and for avenues, roadside and street plantings. The Palo Verde is one of the most drought-resistant trees in the desert area and thrives under a low water supply.

Three Species in This Area

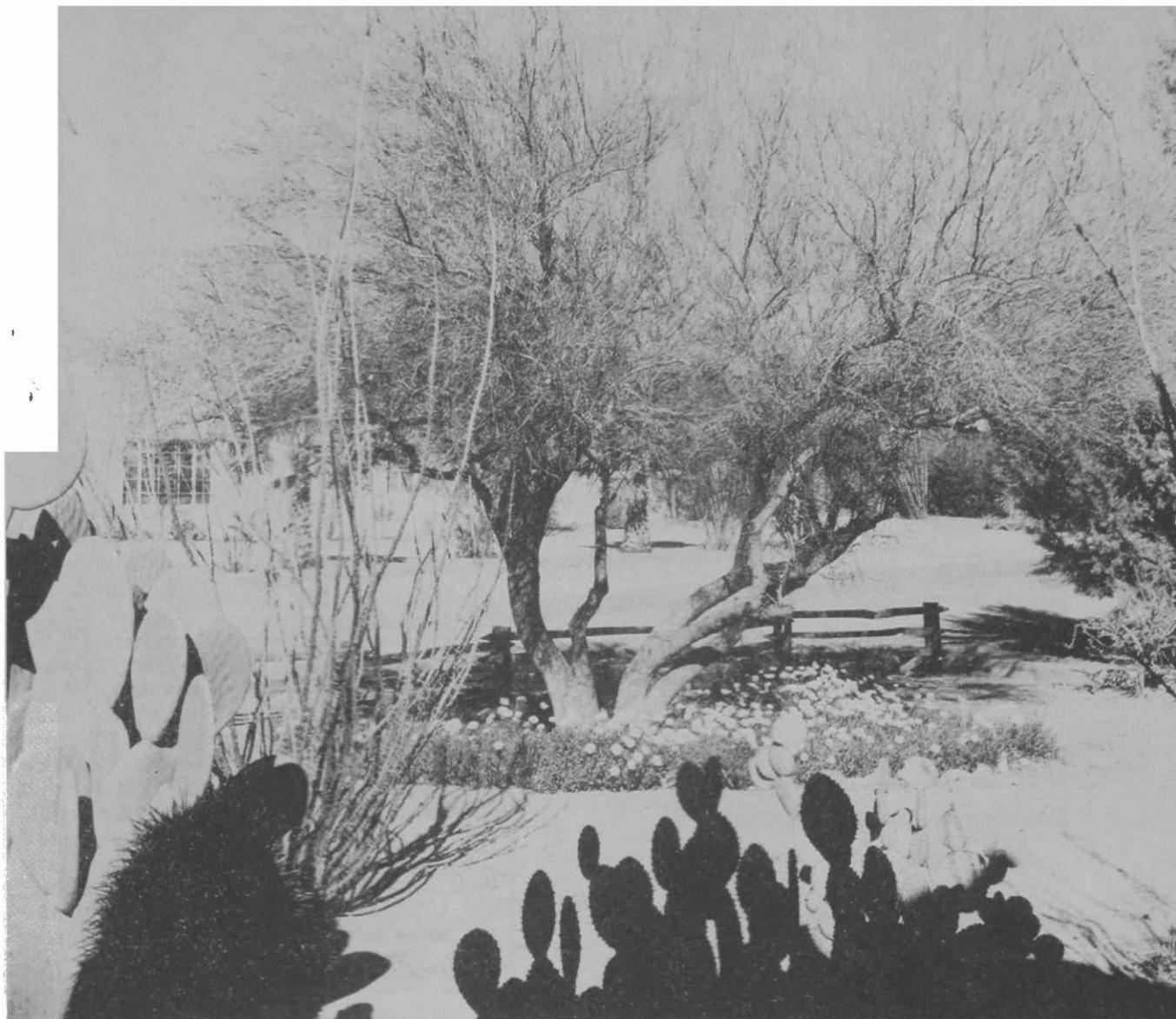
In the desert area there are three main species of Palo Verdes. Most commonly-occurring species in the desert area is the Yellow or Foothill Palo Verde (*Cercidium microphyllum*). It is not suited for horticultural plantings in urban areas. It is associated with saguaro in foothill areas, and is characterized by shrublike form and slow growth.

The Blue Palo Verde (*Cercidium floridum*) is the most popular species for urban plantings. It has blue-green bark, tree-like form and a dominant trunk. At maturity it approximates 20 feet in height, and has a wide spread of branches equal to, or exceeding, the height. Growth response is especially favored by increasing the water supply.

The Blue Palo Verde appears to be more cold-tolerant than other species. Under natural conditions in Arizona it is found native along washes and related surface drainage channels, where there exists a more abundant water supply.

Has Attractive Flowers

Flowers of the Blue Palo Verde are more pronounced and attractive. Flowers are deep yellow with red spots on the banner of the bloom, and the flowers are larger than those of other species. The species blooms about two weeks earlier than the other species, and is more appropriate for urban horticultural plantings, giving more dense shade and less leaf shedding.



The Mexican Palo Verde (*Parkinsonia aculeata*) approximates 25 feet in height in the desert and often more in urban areas under irrigation. It is usually characterized by the dominant single trunk, with upright branches. The tree is evergreen, contrasted to the deciduous nature of the other Palo Verdes.

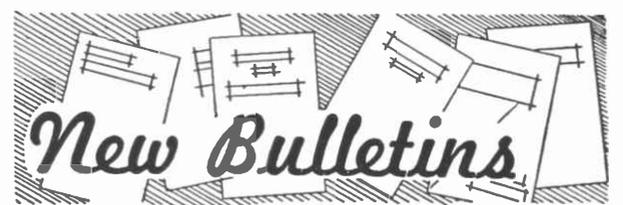
Growth of this species is rapid, especially under irrigation. The species is native to Mexico and in the Baboquivari Mountains southwest of Tucson. It is exceptionally drought and alkali resistant, and has been widely used for horticultural planting in warm regions of the world. The Mexican Palo Verde is appropriate for horticultural plantings in urban areas but not in lawns. It is especially appropriate for accompanying the Blue Palo Verde because its flowering period follows that of the Blue Palo Verde.

Easy to Maintain

Palo Verdes are appropriate for avenue, roadside and street plantings. They require a minimum amount of maintenance compared to most of the trees used for this purpose. It is not desirable to plant the Mexican Palo Verde in lawns, since the falling leaves and seed pods interfere with lawn maintenance. In addition to this, irrigation of lawns would tend to produce excessive Palo Verde growth, accompanied by some breakage of branches.

GROUPED WITH other native plants, the Blue Palo Verde is attractive in urban desert culture.

Aside from shaping the young tree, the Palo Verde requires practically no pruning. Being a legume, it usually requires no supplemental nitrogen.



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- 270—Arizona Agriculture, 1959

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- 181—Corn Variety Tests of 1958
- 182—Lettuce Research in Arizona—Summary for 1958
- 183—Sorghum Variety Tests 1958