

The Weekly Plant

22 May 2016



Common names: Arizona rosewood

Scientific name: *Vauquelinia californica*¹

In our Community: in front of house on lot 34.

Discussion

Oh, the hmmm of happy bees. Visit any flowering Arizona rosewood in our community and you'll hear the hmmm - probably from several feet away.

Arizona rosewood is truly one of ours, found in the US only in SE Arizona and the boothill of New Mexico (it also grows further south, in Mexico). It grows in Saguaro National Park - East at a slightly higher elevation than the Village.



Arizona rosewood is a dense evergreen. It is naturally a large, multi-stemmed shrub (eventually 15' x 15' or more), but removing the lower branches can result in a more tree-like appearance. It is dense enough to provide heavy shade, to slow the wind, and to reduce unwanted noise. The leaves are about 4 inches long, toothed on the edges, leathery, and bicolor - dark green on top and pale green on the underside.

In very late spring, flat-topped clusters (3" across or more) of white flowers appear on the ends of branches. Though each flower is only one-third inch wide, the overall effect can be quite showy. Each flower forms a dark, woody fruit that stays on the plant for months.

Arizona rosewood has become a popular landscape plant, especially as an alternative to oleander. Its dense habit provides shelter for animals. With evergreen leaves, fruit that stays on the tree, and naturally attractive form (so very little pruning is needed), it is an excellent, almost carefree plant for your yard. It is quite drought tolerant. Established plants require watering only once or twice a month in summer.

You may occasionally find insects feeding on the leaves of Arizona rosewood. These are not "chewing insects", which make holes in the leaves, but "sucking insects". Sucking insects - [aphids](#), [psyllids](#), and [lace bugs](#), plus [spider mites](#) - make tiny holes in the leaves and suck out the goodies. This causes discoloration. You will see leaves that are yellowed, spotted, and sticky with honeydew. They may drop off the tree. All the references I consulted stated that these insects are a minor problem for Arizona rosewood and no treatment is needed. Such pests are often present for only a short time. If you must, a strong stream of water will reduce the problem. Natural predators can often control these problems, so use of insecticides is discouraged.

Which brings me to the concept of "treeage", a wit's wordplay on the medical concept of triage. It's a fairly simple concept. When a plant is attacked by a pest - insect, disease, animal - there are three possible outcomes: 1) the plant will get better without intervention, 2) the plant will die no matter the intervention, and 3) the plant will get better with appropriate intervention. Thus, the only time you need to intervene to control a pest is under situation 3. The sucking insects that might attack Arizona rosewood fall into situation 1. Though some leaves may yellow and fall off, the tree is still healthy and will continue to grow and thrive without assistance from you (indeed, a neighbor's rosewoods have had this problem for several years and they are thriving, growing, and flowering).

¹ [Tropicos](#) is source of accepted scientific name.



Top left: dark green top (to right) and paler green underside (to left) of leaves.

Top right: flower cluster

Bottom right: dried, woody fruit capsules

Bottom left: the yellow spotting on the upper portion of the leaf indicates the presence of sucking insects.

Bottom center: This is a [lacewing](#) egg. Lacewings are natural predators. Help is on the way!