



Nature Poetry Walk

**Hosted by the University of Arizona's Poetry Center and Campus Arboretum
Promoting connections between people and plants in urban settings.**

The Poetry Center, founded in 1960, is an internationally renowned poetry library that provides opportunities to enjoy a wide range of activities that promote poetic literacy, and sustain, enrich, and advance diverse literary culture. The University of Arizona Campus Arboretum displays a century of expertise in desert horticulture and promotes stewardship and conservation of a diverse collection of desert-adapted trees with the goal of communicating the environmental, social, and economic value trees contribute in urban settings. Through partnership, we aim to harness the power of poetic language and provide experiences for campus residents and visitors that nourishes appreciation for and connection with the natural world. For more information see: <http://poetry.arizona.edu/> and <http://arboretum.arizona.edu/>

CAMPUS ARBORETUM



DESERT IRONWOOD

Botanical Family: Fabaceae

Scientific Name: *Olneya tesota*

Common Name: Desert Ironwood

Interesting Facts: Desert Ironwood is a long-lived small tree with very dense wood weighing as much as 66 pounds per cubic foot. As one of the heaviest woods on earth, it provides a sturdy and often used building material. Its dense foliage not only serves as a nurse plant, protecting young seedling plants from the sun, it also provides habitat for bees, hummingbirds and a protein-rich food human and other mammalian wildlife.



Desert Ironwood Monologue by Jeevan Narney

Come human, you half-angel, half-monkey
Come gather, come grind, come saw
Come dislocate that which you will relocate in elegy.
Come cut and gather what you will fail to return,
For I am not loved, but I am needed.
Sell my hard temple to make a chair out of me
So that you can sit and look out at the pink-eyed sky,
Thinking, wouldn't it be nice to sit against me and
Listen to the arid dialogue of doves wishing
They were bulletproof in my branches, which is
A wish as public as the sky dropping seeds of light
Quietly on my branches growing pink clusters.

FAIRY DUSTER

Botanical Family: Fabaceae

Scientific Name: *Calliandra eriophylla*

Common Name: Fairy duster

Interesting Facts: Members of the bean family have one of three kinds of flowers. *Calliandra*, which means “beautiful stamens”, has a flower type that produces a brightly colored spray of flower parts resembling the pattern of a fireworks explosion. As a member of the bean family, it fixes nitrogen and produces protein rich seeds housed in seed pods that forcefully spit out their seeds at maturity.



Fairy duster By Christine Baines

Absurd in their little fringed skirts shaking
Salsa with the wind. So flash. So
Flirtatious, strutting their wares. Kiss Me
Pink. Desert night red more fluorescent
Than any lipstick and the bees
Dive right in, sip enchantment.

Come late summer there's that soft crackling sound,
Pods explode, seeds shoot out everywhere
Tickling the fancy. The audacity!
Tarty little plant, flicking those skirts,
Flinging those seeds. Wah hoo!

VELVET MESQUITE

Botanical Family: Fabaceae

Scientific Name: *Prosopis velutina*

Common Name: Velvet mesquite

Interesting Facts: Mesquite trees tolerate poor soils and infrequent rain by producing a deep tap root that ensures against severe drought and provides nitrogen for themselves so that they can make protein-rich pods eaten by native people of the Sonoran desert. Some members of the bean family that produce a dry seed are commonly referred to as pulse crops.



Velvet mesquite By Eric Magrane

Down here
The layers of earth
Are comforting
Like blankets.
The soil I think of
As time. Below the caliche
I sift through sediment
From thousands of years.
Though the sharp desert light above
Is another world, its pulse
Courses through me.
When the mastodons
And ground sloths roamed,
Its pulse coursed through me.
When the Hohokam
In the canyon
Ground my pods
In the stone,
Its pulse coursed through me.
When the new gatherers
Of the desert
Learn again how to live here,

Its pulse will course through me.
And I say, go deep
Into the Earth.
And I say, go deep
Into yourself, go deep
And be ready.

SAGUARO

Botanical Family: Cactaceae

Scientific Name: *Carnegiea gigantea*

Common Name: Saguaro

Interesting Facts: Saguaro are the largest cactus in the United States and only grow in the Sonoran Desert. Under the right conditions, they can live up to 200 years. During most of this time they grow vertically from a single growing point at the top of a single trunk. After almost 100 years, they will begin to form arms beginning about 2/3 of the way up the trunk that arch out slightly and then grow upright and parallel to the trunk. Occasionally unknown causes trigger unusual crested structure.



What the Desert is Thinking By Alison Hawthorne Deming

The saguaros stand up and speak as one about the heat.
They tell the Gila woodpeckers to come in out of the sun.
They tell a man or a woman lost without water
To lie down in the column of shade they make.
The saguaros all hum together like Tibetan or Gregorian monks
One green chord that people hear when they drive
Through Gates Pass and come to the place where they gasp.
Beauty does this though the nihilist will make a joke
About the note of surprise that has escaped from some place
In the throat where loneliness waits to be expelled.
The smile from the joke will cover for the smile for togetherness
With the green. That's okay. Consciousness
Is like the saguaro's decision to wait half a century before extending arms.
Inevitable. No thought.

JOJOBA

Botanical Family: Simmondsiaceae

Scientific Name: *Simmondsia chinensis*

Common Name: Jojoba

Interesting Facts: Fruit often persists on the plant throughout the year and ground seeds in the fruit produce a wax that is used for medicines, shampoo and other personal care items. Its fine quality makes the wax a good alternative to the oil traditionally derived from sperm whale. Although the seeds are considered edible and have been used as a coffee substitute, they are toxic to consume in large quantities.



Ode to a Sonoran Jojoba

By Erec Toso

Oba Jojoba

Most lovely helpmate companion
Succulent soap and hero unsung
How many whales swim free
Because of your gifts of golden oils?
Generous to a fault
A sprung Persephone
Humble and enduring and slightly waxy
A blooming god in the harshness of heat and light
Pear-shaped leaves
Turk's cap of green
You rule the sands
And yield secrets to mortals
Without complaint or repayment.
Forgive me when my eyes seek the hawk
Or the track of a lion
Or the glamour of a cereus.

It is you
Homespun bloom
Patient continuity
That I come to
In my pain
Of scrapes in need of antiseptic
Of earthly ailments
How could I love you more
Revere your woody arms
Your cloistered roots
Your coffee-colored fruit
Your sustaining alchemy?
When I leave the land of the blind
And give up acting the fool
I will join you.

SOUTHERN LIVE OAK TREES

Botanical Family: Fagaceae

Scientific Name: *Quercus virginiana*

Common Name: Southern live oak

Interesting Facts: Southern live oaks are native to the southeastern United States, ranging from Virginia through the Gulf Coast to Texas. This is one of the largest and longest living species in its native range. The Seven Sisters live oak, named in honor of the seven Doby sisters from Mandeville, LA, is certified as the largest existing live oak. It is nearly 68 feet tall, almost 40 feet in diameter at its base and is more than 1,500 years old. This example, planted by former U of A Professor of Horticulture Steve Fazio around 1950, is part of the University's Heritage Tree Collection, a grouping of 22 trees that are among the most unique trees on campus. .

Professor Fazio reportedly planted several acorns here in the Park Avenue green belt area and this one remains. The Heritage Tree Collection represents an important link to the University's status as the only Land Grant Institute in the Sonoran Desert



Oak Tree
By Matsuo Basho
(translated by Robert Hass)

The oak tree:
not interested
in cherry blossoms.

CALIFORNIA FAN PALM TREES

Botanical Family: Aracaceae

Scientific Name: *Washingtonia filifera*

Common Name: California fan palm

Interesting Facts: Interesting Facts: This palm is native to the far southwestern corner of Arizona, southeastern California and Baja California. It grows in oases-like colonies near natural springs where underground water is readily available. Its fibrous root system allows easy water uptake and it is well adapted to the arid climate where it naturally grows. This palm, along with other palm species planted throughout the campus, gives the University a classic desert oasis look and feel. Named in honor of George Washington, the species name, *filifera*, means thread bearing in reference to its long curling threads seen between the leaf segments. Native Americans harvested the fruit and used the leaves to make roofs, sandals and for basket making.



A Palm Tree By Heinrich Heine

A single fir-tree, lonely,
on a northern mountain height,
sleeps in a white blanket,
draped in snow and ice.

His dreams are of a palm-tree,
who, far in eastern lands,
weeps, all alone and silent,
among the burning sands.

EUROPEAN OLIVE TREES

Botanical Family: Lauraceae

Scientific Name: *Olea europaea*

Common Name: European olive

Interesting Facts: Olives are native to the Mediterranean basin and archeological evidence suggests that they have been cultivated for at least 6,000 years. Olives were brought to the new world by Spanish explorers and introduced to the University campus by Robert Forbes, first Dean of the College of Agriculture, in 1895. The rows of trees here along Park Avenue were purchased from a nursery in Santa Barbara. Ongoing research on the tree's genetic makeup suggests that some of the varieties of trees found here don't match the trees remaining in California. This means that the varieties that do well in Tucson's climate are different from the varieties in California and this is exactly what Forbes was trying to do – find crops that would grow well for the citizens of Tucson. The olive trees symbolize the university's commitment to education, research and outreach and highlights the diversity of plants and people on campus



The Olive Tree

By Karl Shapiro

Save for a lusterless honing-stone of moon
The sky stretches its flawless canopy
Blue as the blue silk of the Jewish flag
Over the valley and out to sea.
It is bluest just above the olive tree.
You cannot find in twisted Italy
So straight a one; it stands not on a crag,
Is not humpbacked with bearing in scored stone,
But perfectly erect in my front yard,
Oblivious of its fame. The fruit is hard,
Multitudinous, acid, tight on the stem;
The leaves ride boat-like in the brimming sun,
Going nowhere and scooping up the light.
It is the silver tree, the holy tree,
Tree of all attributes.

CAROB TREES

Botanical Family: Fabaceae

Scientific Name: *Cerotinia siliqua*

Common Name: Carob

Interesting Facts: Carob trees, native to the Mediterranean area, have been cultivated for thousands of years and used as food by both humans and animals. The ripe dried seed pod can be ground into powder and is used as a substitute for cocoa. Historically, carob seed pods were used as a standard measure of weight because it was thought that their weight was consistent. The term carat which is used both as a unit of mass in gemstones and an indication of purity for gold, takes its name from the Arabic word for the carob seed.



Honi and the Carob Tree
Posted on March 30, 2012
A Talmud Tale (from spiritoftrees.org)
Told by Peninnah Schram

Honi the Wise One was also known as Honi the Circle Maker. By drawing a circle and stepping inside of it, he would recite special prayers for rain, sometimes even argue with God during a drought, and the rains would come. He was, indeed, a miracle maker. As wise as he was, Honi sometimes saw something that puzzled him. Then he would ask questions so he could unravel the mystery. One day, Honi the Circle Maker was walking on the road and saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi asked the man, "How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?"

The man replied, "Seventy years." Honi then asked the man, "And do you think you will live another seventy years and eat the fruit of this tree?" The man answered, "Perhaps not. However, when I was born into this world, I found many carob trees planted by my father and grandfather. Just as they planted trees for me, I am planting trees for my children and grandchildren so they will be able to eat the fruit of these trees."