



**Scientific Name:** *Havardia pallens*

**Synonyms:** *Pithecellobium pallens*, *Calliandra pallens*, *Havardia brevifolia*

**Common Names:** Tenaza, Huajillo

**Botanical Family:** Fabaceae

**Characteristics:**

Tenaza is a small to medium sized, broad-leaved tree growing 5 m (15 feet) tall and wide, though occasionally growing greater than 10 m (30 feet) (2, 4). The wood is hard, heavy, close-grained and dark reddish-brown (2). The trunk is covered by smooth grey to reddish, thin bark which breaks into small flakes, occasionally bearing a few spines (2). Branches are irregularly spreading and airy and

bear large spines (2). Leaves are dusty green, bipinnately compound, alternately arranged with revolute leaf margins (2, 4). The flowers of the tenaza tree look like a small puffball, with each of the "petals", which are thin white rods, coming from a center point. Flowers appear creamy white, are fragrant and borne in a 10 cm (~6 inch) long inflorescence between May and August (2, 5), Fruit is a reddish-brown, 2- to 5-inch-long dehiscent legume pod, containing lustrous, flattened round, brown-black seeds (2, 4).

**Compound:** Hav pal

**Geographic Origin:** Mexico, Southwest Texas

**Ecozone Origin:** Nearctic

**Biome Origin:**

**Natural History:**

Tenaza is found in the Southwest parts of Texas and the Northeastern parts of Mexico (1, 2,3). Tenaza is especially prevalent in the coastal plain regions of the Rio Grande or in other loamy alluvial soils near riverbeds and watering holes, as well as near marshes, lakes, and ponds (3, 4, 5).

**Cultivation Notes:**

The upright growth of this tree and its tropical appearance are very different from other *Havardia* species. It can be propagated from seed but requires initial scarification treatment and warm (28°C) conditions to optimize germination (3). It is suited for USDA Hardiness Zone 9 (2). It prefers full sun, tolerates partial shade, is adaptable to various soil types and requires low to moderate amounts of watering are ideal for proper growth (4, 5).

**Ethnobotany:**

This tree is useful as an ornamental plant due to its fragrant, showy, blooms, fast rate of growth, vase/upright shape and generally small size (4). It is ideal for use near patios or in backyards to provide filtered shade. Tenaza also supports pollinator bees, and provides feed for grazing animals such as goats and sheep (4). Its wood is also used to craft small objects (2). Further, because of its adaptability to wet or dry sites, tenaza has value for use in revegetation areas (2).

**Height:** 20 - 50 feet

**Width:** 20 - 50 feet

**Growth Rate:** Fast Growing

**Grow Season:** Spring

**Flower Season:** Summer

**Color:** White

**Function:** Patio

**Spread:** Non-spreading

**Allergen:** Non-allergenic

**Invasive:** Benign

**Toxicity:** Benign

**Hardy:** Hardy

**Water Use:** Low water Use

**Resources:**

1. USDA <https://plants.usda.gov/home/plantProfile?symbol=HAPA10> Retrieved June 14, 2024
2. University of Texas <https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/ornamentals/nativeshrubs/havardiapallen.htm> Retrieved June 14, 2024
3. The Southwest Naturalist, 1998 Vol. 43, No.1 pg. 40-46  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/30055330?seq=5> Retrieved June 14, 2024
4. Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center  
[https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=hapa10](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=hapa10) Retrieved June 14, 2024
5. Shuler, Carol. Low-Water-Use Plants. Da Capo Press, 1993.