



ARIZONA-SONORA DESERT MUSEUM

PLANT CARE INFORMATION

Torote

Bursera filicifolia/B. laxiflora

DESCRIPTION: Old World relatives of elephant trees are the sources of frankincense and myrrh. Some of the New World species are also highly aromatic and are used as incense. *Bursera filicifolia* is a tree from southern Baja California with a somewhat swollen (semi-succulent) trunk. *B. laxiflora*, a closely related species, can be found growing along the western half of Sonora, Mexico. The former has a gray trunk and fuzzy leaves and the latter has reddish bark and glossy leaves. Both growth rate and ultimate size are controlled primarily by container size. When a plant has lots of root room, it grows very fast, producing two to three feet of new growth per season. When potbound, growth slows almost to a standstill, though the trunk will continue to thicken with age. Flowers are tiny and white. Fruit are small, but attractive orange ovals with a black spot. Torote is in leaf primarily during the summer growing season, though some foliage may persist year round. Stem growth is limited to the humid summer monsoon season.

RECOMMENDED USES: In cold areas of Tucson we recommend pot culture. In warmer sites it can be used as an accent or small patio specimen, or pruned ornamentally for its form.

CULTURE



Hardiness: Torote is probably the hardiest *Bursera* of our region. However, it still needs protection from temperatures below 25°F. Growing it against a southerly wall is sufficient for light frosts. At cold sites, grow in a container to be brought under cover or indoors for the winter.



Sun tolerance: Full sun or very light shade. Growth will be spindly in shadier sites.



Watering and feeding: Moderate during summer growing season. Reduce watering to about once a month during winter. Container culture requires close monitoring in order to prevent drying out.



Soil requirements: Well-drained. Repot only in the summer.



Pruning: Prune to shape. This is especially important if you want to maintain a bonsai form. As soon as new branches are a few inches long, pinch back to a few leaves. If you prefer, prune to longer sprouts to get a larger plant.