



ARIZONA-SONORA DESERT MUSEUM PLANT CARE INFORMATION

Southwestern Coral Bean or Chilicote *Erythrina flabelliformis*

DESCRIPTION: Southwestern Coral Bean is a small tree or shrub with open branching. It is winter deciduous, and may not leaf out until May. Large leaves have small hooked spines on their petioles. It thrives in desert conditions, growing to as much as 12 feet in the southwest, and much larger in frost-free areas. The 3 inch long, tubular flowers are in showy terminal clusters at the tips of the woody stems. These rich red blossoms occur in May, around the time the plant is leafing out. The nectar-filled flowers attract hummingbirds. Large, brown pods follow, with several large, attractive, highly toxic, red, tan, or brown beans. Southwestern Coral Bean is native to southern Arizona and southwest and southeast New Mexico. It is also native to Baja California and northern and central Mexico. People in Mexico have been known to use the juice of the stem to help treat a scorpion strings and the bark is used to help reduce fevers, help with the symptoms of dysentery and irritation in the eyes. Also, the bark is considered to be beautiful because of its light yellowish color, therefore many people in the Mexican society use the bark for cork, art and religious masks. In some cultures, the seeds of the plant are taken as a drug because of the hallucinations that result.

RECOMMENDED USE: Accent and for its tropical look when in leaf.

CULTURE:



Hardiness: Can take short freezes to 18°F when larger, but protect when small.



Sun tolerance: Full sun to light all-day shade.



Watering and feeding: Can be quite low in water use when established. Best to have regular water when in leaf, from middle May until fall. Feeding not necessary except in containers.



Soil requirements: Most soils that drain will do.



Pruning: Best to plant where pruning will not be needed, as it inhibits next year's flowering.