



Friends of SNOW CANYON

What's That Plant??

Without question, Mesquite was the most important food plant for Native Americans in the deserts of the Southwest. It was such a reliable food source that village sites were often selected because of their proximity to Mesquite trees.

In late summer and fall, the ripe pods were collected and stored in large basket granaries for use in the winter. The entire fruit (including the seeds or beans) was ground into a sweet and nutritious pulp to be eaten or made into cakes. Other plant parts were used for bows, medicine, tools and firewood.

Look For...

Foliage: Bright green, compound leaves made up of small leaflets. The dark brown branches have sharp thorns up to 2" long.



Flowers: Fragrant, narrow clusters of small, yellow-green flowers occur in late spring.

Fruit: Pea-like pods up to 7" long appear in late summer and dry to a tan color. A large Mesquite tree can produce over twenty pounds of fruit in a good year!



Habit: Honey Mesquite is a small, wide spreading tree or shrub reaching up to 30 feet tall. It grows at elevations below 5,000 feet.

Honey Mesquite *Prosopis glandulosa* Fabaceae — Pea or Legume Family



Other types of Mesquite...

Screwbean Mesquite (*P. pubescens*) is another native found in this area. It is easily distinguished by the unusual seed pods that look like turned screws.



Screwbean Mesquite

Today, Mesquite trees are a popular landscape plant. They are fast growing, tolerant of drought and have clean foliage throughout the growing season. However, the pods can be a maintenance issue.

One of the most popular cultivars of Honey Mesquite is '**Maverick**' which is thornless and very cold hardy. Several non native species are also available, including Chilean, Argentine, and Arizona Velvet Mesquite. Some have not proven to be as cold hardy as the native species. Many types of Mesquite can be seen at the Red Cliffs Desert Garden in St. George.